



PEAKE PASHA WEARING ARAB UNIFORM WHILST SERVING UNDER  
LAWRENCE OF ARABIA

# ARAB COMMAND

THE BIOGRAPHY OF LIEUTENANT-  
COLONEL F. G. PEAKE PASHA  
C.M.G., C.B.E.

by  
MAJOR C. S. JARVIS  
C.M.G., O.B.E.

*With 17 Illustrations*

HUTCHINSON & CO. (Publishers) LTD.  
LONDON : NEW YORK : MELBOURNE : SYDNEY

*By the same Author :*

YESTERDAY AND TO-DAY IN SINAI (*Blackwood's*)

THREE DESERTS (*John Murray*)

DESERT AND DELTA (*John Murray*)

ORIENTAL SPOTLIGHT (*John Murray*)

THE BACK-GARDEN OF ALLAH (*John Murray*)

*First Published September 1942*

*Reprinted February 1943*

*Reprinted April 1943*

*Reprinted May 1946,*

Acc. No.	18929
Class No.	G. 10.
Book No.	910

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## FOREWORD

by

EARL WINTERTON, P.C., M.P.

MAJOR JARVIS HAS WRITTEN AN ADMIRABLY CLEAR AND SUCCINCT ACCOUNT of the last stages of what was officially known as "Hedjaz operations." I figure in an incident at the end of Chapter V. My answer to the somewhat derogatory remark of the British soldier is too full-bodied to be printed. It produced a reply from the latter *sotto voce*, "G—wd, it's an orficer," and aloud, in a somewhat wheedling tone, "I'm sorry, sir, I didn't know you was an orficer until you spoke!"

When you have served with a man in a period of intense stress, strain and excitement, always short of sleep, and often short of food, frequently in great danger, and never wholly free from it, cut off from the conditions of ordinary warfare—lines of communication, base hospitals, and the like—you soon assess his worth. At that time I put my friend, Peake's, very high indeed.

His subsequent career most fully confirmed the opinion which I formed. He and his British colleague in Trans-Jordan, and other Englishmen in Arab territories further south, by influence and advice, rather than by direct rule, maintained true friendship and understanding between the Arab peoples in general, and the British Empire.

It was a time of great disturbance elsewhere, and of events which were alarming to the devout and fanatical Arab. For the period during which Peake was in Trans-Jordania covered the fall of the Khalifat, our dispute with Turkey, which culminated in the Chanak incident, and the subsequent disappearance of the Coalition Government, a whole series of troubles in Palestine, and the most acute Hindu-Moslem friction in India, accompanied by bloody riots and the cry, "Islam is in danger."

Peake's role, and that of the others to whom I have referred, was the traditional one of the Englishman in the East; that which was so successfully performed in India before that country became part of the Empire.

I will conclude with a story. When, in September 1918, I left Lawrence at Deraa, he said to me, "Whatever your future career may be, you will never again participate in such high-tension affairs as we have just experienced." He was wrong, for exactly twenty years later I happened to be a Member of the British Cabinet. Readers of this book do not need to be reminded of the fateful events of September, 1938.

## INTRODUCTION

IT IS WITH THE GREATEST PLEASURE THAT I HAVE UNDERTAKEN TO RECORD for the benefit of the reading public an account, though necessarily an incomplete one, of the very full life of my old friend and opposite number, Peake of Trans-Jordan. The task is one for which I think I may justifiably claim to be as well qualified—by factual knowledge, if not by literary merit—as anyone, since for fourteen years Peake and I held similar administrative posts on either side of the River Jordan—he to the east of it in the ancient Biblical lands of Moab and Edom, and I to the west in the equally ancient and Biblical land of Sinai. We thus enjoyed, among other things in common, a mutual link with Moses, who had passed through our territories as a wanderer some three thousand years previously and had found them, just as we did, lamentably wanting in the general amenities of life.

For those fourteen years we were next-door neighbours and, though the “fence” that separated our respective back-gardens was the 40-mile wide and 3,000-feet deep rift in the earth’s surface of the Wadi Araba, we lived on terms of closer friendship and saw more of each other than do many of the suburban residents of outer London, where the dividing line between two families may be no more than a 4-inch brick wall. In my visitors’ book of those days you may find Peake’s name inscribed on almost every page—indications of the many occasions on which he came over to Sinai, to attend an Arab court or meeting and see fair play for his tribes. His visitors’ book is as profusely embellished with my name for the same reason.

Actually our frontiers did not touch, for the narrow strip of Palestine’s no-man’s land from Beer-sheba to Akaba intervened, but, since during the first ten years of our rule the Palestine Government did not function at all in that part of the world, Peake and I, to ensure the peace and security of our mutual peoples, took over, unofficially and unasked, the administration of this preserve of the outlaw and ran it as a sort of dual and quite unrecognized mandate. When two men can work together in harmony in an area in which they are both interlopers and where the governments of neither function, it is proof indeed of a friendship that will withstand the impacts of both Occident and Orient.

In this biography I intend to deal fully only with that part of Peake’s life which has a general bearing on world affairs, or, to be exact, on that portion of Middle-Eastern world affairs represented by the history of the

semi-independent Arab state of Trans-Jordan, for the freedom of which he fought under Lawrence of Arabia, and the formation of which, after the armistice of 1918, has constituted his life's work. During this period of twenty-one years he served in Trans-Jordan while it suffered its birth pangs—and the birth pangs of a newly created Arab state are very acute—until it finally emerged into the peace and security of the nineteen-twenties and early thirties.

At the beginning of his service in the country he raised and trained the famous Arab Legion, the force that Major Glubb led recently against the Iraqi rebels, and was responsible not only for the public security and policing of this wild, semi-desert land, but also and more particularly for its general administration. His wide knowledge of the people and his great personal popularity among both the nomad tribesmen and the inhabitants of the towns and villages enabled him to select the right men for the right posts and thus create a decentralized command that is, and will remain a pattern of perfect government.

Peake Pasha built slowly, but he built well and on a solid foundation, and the administration and Legion he evolved have stood the test not only of time, but of war and open rebellion in all the neighbouring countries. The fact that Trans-Jordan remained peaceful and loyal during the recent revolt in Irak, and earlier whilst the whole of Palestine blazed up in stark rebellion, is a remarkable testimonial to the work performed by a great man. It is evidence also of the extent to which personality counts in the countries east of Suez.

During the greater part of this period Peake worked under, and in the closest co-operation with, the Emir Abdulla of Trans-Jordan, of whom Lawrence wrote in *The Seven Pillars of Wisdom*: "I became sure that Abdulla was too balanced, too cool, too humorous to be a prophet; his value would come in peace after success." This was merely one of the many correct forecasts Lawrence made, as for twenty years now this wise and far-seeing Prince has successfully ruled and guided Trans-Jordan, with the assistance always, during his term of office, of his *fidus Achates*, Peake, who advised him as to the various policies to be pursued and, what was more difficult, reconciled them with the views of the series of queer Governments which held the reins of office in Great Britain during that time.

It is my task now to put on paper how this work was carried out and to draw some picture of the country and the people so notably served; but before doing so I must deal with the Revolt in the Desert from Peake's own point of view—the point of view of one who acted as the leader of an independent column in the final advance, and was able to record many unfamiliar impressions of the character and actions of that mysterious portent, Lawrence of Arabia.

## ENGLAND, INDIA AND EGYPT

"Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it well with thy might for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave." (*Ecclesiastes.*)

THE EARLY PART OF PEAKE'S LIFE—CHILDHOOD, SCHOOLDAYS, SANDHURST and the Army—is so similar to that of ninety-nine men out of every hundred who choose a soldier's career, that one might pick up almost any military biography, copy it out, changing names, localities and regiments as required, and end by having a fairly accurate account of his more youthful days. I propose, therefore, to deal with this period very briefly. The fact that he was primarily intended for the Navy, and not the Army, is by no means unique, for it would seem that at least fifty per cent of those soldiers who have risen to sufficient eminence to warrant the publication of their reminiscences, originally chose, or were chosen for the Senior Service, and entered the Army later in life, either from inclination or through inability to pass the Naval entrance examinations. In Peake's particular case the examinations were the stumbling-block, and after he had spent three years at Stubbington, a private school which specializes in passing candidates for the Navy, the principals of that establishment had to admit defeat. Disappointed by the failure of this first offensive, Peake's father now recommended a change of objective. Peake was transferred to the Army Class—only to find that the Junior Service's examiners were as hard to please as those of the Senior. They ploughed him three times. As a last despairing resort he was sent to study under a private tutor in France, where for six months he lived with a large French family and where, either because there was nothing much else for a boy of eighteen to do or because he was at last awakening to some sense of responsibility, he worked both by day and by night in his efforts to acquire the knowledge necessary to his purpose. The light shining from his room in the small hours of the morning became a familiar sight to gamblers returning late from the casino at Dieppe.

On his return to England he went up for the Sandhurst examination, and his family, particularly his father, who was getting somewhat restive, waited anxiously for the result. When the newspaper announcing the names of the successful candidates, some two hundred in number, arrived by the morning post, his father, chastened by past experiences, started to read the list from bottom upwards. Failing to find his son's name included among the last fifty, he threw the paper down in disgust. "There's nothing for it, then, but the colonies," he said—and breakfast that morning began very gloomily. Peake's sister, however—sisters for some reason or other always appear to be more optimistic than fathers—picked up the paper

again, and started to read the list from the top. To the amazement of everybody she found that her brother's name figured in it as number fifteen !

Peake spent one year at Sandhurst and was then posted to his unit, the Duke of Wellington's, known in those days as the West Riding Regiment, at Lichfield. It was his ambition, however, to serve in India, and by dint of paying the homeward passage money of the man he was relieving he managed eventually to effect a transfer to the other battalion of the regiment, which was then stationed at Ambala. Before sailing for India he was granted a short leave, which he spent with his family at home—an uneventful visit, the only surviving memory of which is a remark made to him by a very old man in the village, when he went to wish him good-bye.

"Now, Master Fred," the old man said, "when you go abroad, whatever you do, don't you go and marry one of them Frenchies !"

That was in 1906—some eighty-one years after the long series of Napoleonic wars had come to an end at Waterloo—yet even then, as this episode shows, the shadow of those endless years of anxiety and adversity still hung over the old people of the country-side. To them the "Frenchies" were still anathema. To marry one would place a man beyond the pale. Few even of the oldest inhabitants could have dated back to the days when every village had its company of Fencibles, raised to resist invasion, and when the church towers were used as stores for their muskets, but the memory of those times must have been very prominent in the minds of their parents, and doubtless this old man in his childhood had often subdued his howls on his mother's threatening to "fetch Boney to him."

After the early years of laziness and slackness at school Peake seems to have turned over a new leaf, for he went to India burning with enthusiasm for his new career and resolved to be a very keen and efficient soldier. He found, however, that at Ambala such an attitude was, to say the least, regarded as unusual. Army life in India in those days was a very gay and pleasant affair. Except in the frontier units, hardly anyone ever dreamt of doing serious work. During the winter, when game shooting was at its best, it was possible to harrest as much as four days' leave a week—and to continue so to do for the whole of the non-training period. On Sundays the only duty was Church Parade—and permission to be absent from this was easy to obtain ; Thursday had, of course, been a general military holiday ever since the days of Lord Roberts ; and the Colonel could in addition give two days' leave a week without reference to the Brigadier—a right which he was, as a rule, prepared to exercise to the fullest extent. One had, therefore, only to play one's cards properly, to keep in with the Colonel and the Adjutant, particularly the Adjutant, and one was under no compulsion to work on more than three days in every week ! Such were the glorious opportunities offered to the young officers of the British Army in India in 1906—and the majority of them took full advantage of the situation. To Peake, however, this state of affairs offered little attraction ; it was out of harmony with his new-born enthusiasm for hard work, and he resented the obvious expectation that he should spend the greater part of his time at the Club—poodle-faking, as it was called in those days. Such distractions held no interest for him, nor had he, for that matter, the where-

withal to meet the expenditure involved. The pay of a lieutenant in 1906 was only 6s. 6d. a day, and even with an allowance from home to help him he found it difficult to make ends meet. In this connection he was fortunate in having a marked aptitude for learning languages. Substantial monetary considerations were offered to officers who made themselves proficient in the various tongues of India, so he spent most of his spare time studying one or other of these, and might be found at every available moment poring over dictionary and grammar, or trying out his newly acquired knowledge on any Indian who would let him. During his time in India he passed four examinations in Urdu, two in Persian and one in Pushtu, and the financial rewards accruing from these activities just enabled him to keep his head above water. The effort expended in the mastery of these languages proved valuable to him later, for during Lawrence's campaign there were various Indian detachments serving in the Arab forces, while but few of the British officers concerned knew any form of Hindustani. The knowledge of Persian, too, with its Arabic alphabet, served as an excellent foundation when Peake subsequently had to take up the study of Arabic.

If the gaieties of the social life now thrust upon him held but little attraction for Peake's earnest mind, its more formal obligations appealed to him even less. One of the banes of his existence in those early days was the "Duty Call." Ambala, like every other big Indian station, included among its inhabitants vast numbers of married officers and important civilians—and the importance of an important civilian in India is almost beyond belief—on all of whom the newly-joined subaltern was expected to call. He was handed a list by the senior subaltern, and told to get on with the job *quam primum*. Happily for the victims of this formidable ordinance, there was a station custom whereby married people placed a box at their gates into which the cards of intending callers could be placed. Peake struck on the not very original idea of waiting till some big polo match or other well-attended function had drained the houses of their inmates, and then sending the syce round with a packet of cards to be dropped into every box he could find. The syce's first tour was a brilliant success, and he reported on his return that he had managed to complete something like two-thirds of the list. On his second and final round, however, his enthusiasm outran his discretion, for, resolved to make a thorough job of the business, he not only worked off the remaining third, but played out his hand by depositing the residue of his cards in the boxes of people who had been similarly honoured the previous week. Some of the people who had suffered from this mis-deal thought it outrageous that a newly-joined subaltern should behave in this casual manner, and Peake was reported to the General, who "told him off." This, by the way, was not the only occasion on which he was "put on the mat" for slackness in the matter of this important social obligation. A year or so later, when he was staying in Simla with a relative who was very high up in the Indian Civil Service, this dignitary happened to mention that calling in that city was often done by post. When the time for paying calls came round again that winter—it coincided most inconveniently with the shooting season—Peake acted on this information and posted a sheaf of cards. Unfortunately his relative had failed to make it clear that this glorious method



of short-circuiting a long-winded business was permissible only to the most exalted of the "Heaven-Borns," as the I.C.S. were called in India, and certainly not to second-lieutenants of infantry battalions. Peake was again reported and brought up before the General. This time, however, the G.O.C. saw the humour of the situation and was hard put to it to keep his face under control whilst he administered the required reprimand, and ever afterwards, when the two chanced to meet, he evinced an inquisitive interest in any novel methods Peake might have devised in the furtherance of his campaign against this social duty.

It must not be supposed, however, that the interests of the 2nd Battalion of the Duke of Wellington's in 1906 were centred exclusively on the pursuits of peace, that the officers spent their entire time between killing game and paying calls. There were periods of training when a more martial spirit prevailed—seasons of intense activity when social considerations were subordinated to military, and "poodle-faking" gave place to soldiering. To Peake these intervals came as a welcome relief. Their high-water mark was reached in the biennial periods of manoeuvres—operations in many of which he took part, and about which he has some quite amusing stories to tell, notably about those of 1912, which were designed on a specially grand scale for the delectation of the Viceroy, who had been invited to attend, particular emphasis being laid on this occasion on the value of rapid communication between units. In this essential our outposts were at that time hardly up to date, and, though wireless installations were already in common use at home, none had as yet been issued officially to the army in India. One division, however, had acquired a set by private purchase, and, being inordinately proud of the contraption, invited the Viceroy to come and see it work. As ill-luck would have it, on the very eve of the demonstration the machine went on strike. Some mechanical catastrophe had occurred in its vitals, and in spite of frantic searches not a man could be found with sufficient knowledge to put it right. Nothing daunted, the officer in charge devised a most effective makeshift. He coupled up the set to the lighting mains by a concealed cable and, having thus assured himself of the current necessary for the production of all the weird noises and sparks habitually emitted by the field-transmitters of that epoch, arranged that the actual messages should be sent and received over the nearby railway telegraph system and delivered *in situ* by relays of fast runners, who were careful to keep well out of sight of the inspecting visitors. The demonstration was an outstanding triumph. The Viceroy and his staff were visibly impressed by the magnetic convulsions of the machine, which they had no reason to doubt indicated a business-like capacity for transmitting and receiving information. The officer in charge enjoyed a *succès fou*, and was highly complimented on his skill and devotion to duty.

Another amusing vignette from these same manoeuvres shows us Peake in the unrehearsed—and, in the circumstances, rather hazardous—role of Fairy Godmother to a cold and hungry battalion. That he was unwittingly cast for this part was due to the arrangement (again for the benefit of the Viceroy) of a demonstration of the Army's ability to march and fight on its iron rations. This is the kind of performance which the Staff is

prone to stage for the benefit of the ordinary soldier, when it has no intention of appearing in the programme itself—except, of course, as producer. The iron ration of those days was a nauseating affair, consisting of a metal tube containing a small block of solidified pea-soup, impervious to fire, water or any other element, and a slab of chocolate which was its direct counterpart, for it was susceptible to them all. As it happened, the day selected for the test had been spent in the most arduous marching, and the night which followed it was bitterly cold. You may imagine, then, that Peake and his brother officers, crouching over their bivouac-fire that evening, with nothing inside them but a parody of pea-soup and some very stale chocolate, were all of them, including the Brigadier, in the foulest of tempers. Suddenly the creaking of the wheels of a line of bullock-carts was heard in the distance, and shortly afterwards a number of these ungainly vehicles drew up in the circle of light thrown by the camp-fires. The man in charge of this mysterious cortège called out for "Peake Sahib," and Peake, who was at that time acting as Quartermaster to the battalion, left his seat by the fire to find out what was afoot. "At your honour's commands," a loud voice, which rang through the jungle, proclaimed, "I have brought up the canteen."

This was, of course, the signal for a mad rush of men from every corner of the big bivouac, and before the officers knew what was happening half the battalion had meat-pies and mugs of beer in their hands. After this it did not seem to matter very much if the whole of the carefully staged test fell to the ground, and the officers sat down to a very excellent dinner which the canteen contractor had thoughtfully provided for their consumption. It was with some relief, however, that Peake observed the Brigadier and the Colonel tucking in as heartily as anyone else. The strange feature of the episode was that Peake had in fact given no order to the contractor to bring up the canteen. He failed, of course, to convince anyone of his innocence in the matter, but discovered to his relief that, far from being in disgrace for having sabotaged the demonstration, he was adjudged to be a young officer of considerable initiative and acumen—not to mention low cunning, which amounts to much the same thing, and is generally recognized to be quite the most useful attribute an ambitious soldier can possess.

In the autumn of 1913 Peake put in an application for secondment to the Egyptian Army. His chief reason for taking this step was his conviction that life in the Sudan, with Sudanese troops under his command, would offer greater variety and interest and a better chance of active service than could be hoped for in the course of ordinary routine soldiering at home. (Since the war of 1914-18 was destined to break out some nine months later, his estimate of the probabilities of active service proved, of course, to have been based on entirely false deductions.) His determination to apply for this appointment was strengthened, too, by the high prestige which the Egyptian Army at that time enjoyed. It was regarded in those days as the *corps d'élite* of the British service, and the competition for secondment to it was very keen indeed.

Its reputation was in fact mainly due to what can only be styled "the Kitchener Tradition." Kitchener, recently the Sirdar and then the High Commissioner of Egypt and the Sudan, had reorganized and re-officered the

force in the nineties, and the successful campaign in which he led it against the Khalifa in 1898 stood out as the most brilliant military achievement of those days. This general had, it is true, won further laurels in the South African War, but that was a campaign of many leaders, which he may be said merely to have finished off after a not too satisfactory beginning, whereas the Sudanese campaign was his and his alone, from the very first move of the Anglo-Egyptian force up the Nile to the final victory at Omdurman. It coupled the name of the force with his own in indissoluble association for all time and established its reputation on a sure base.

To have served a term in the Egyptian Army at any time prior to 1914 counted for much in an officer's career. It shed a lustre on his record-sheet—marked it, as it were, with an asterisk implying a reputation for keenness and efficiency above the ordinary.

In more recent times, for a variety of reasons, similar service has not been regarded in quite the same light. The methods and tactics of modern warfare are so very ephemeral that the removal of an officer, even for a relatively short period, from the hub of things must constitute a definite setback in his career. It leads to an archaism of ideas, a kind of military obsolescence, which it is difficult to relinquish, and the Higher Command have for some time now been exercised in their minds as to the wisdom of seconding officers for these special duties, when the result in the long run must be a decline in their value for the purposes of general service.

Another point which they have to consider is the attitude likely to be taken up by an officer, thus seconded, when his tour of duty comes to an end. They may, on the one hand, reap the advantage of securing a soldier who, though perhaps somewhat out-of-date in general military practice, has obtained knowledge of different lands and peoples and can probably speak their languages fluently; but on the other hand must be placed the indisputable fact that in many cases they have lost that officer's services for good. After five years' work with native troops, and the varied, interesting life which soldiering in Asia or Africa brings in its train, many men feel that they cannot face again the humdrum conditions of service at home. On the conclusion of their period of secondment they either contrive to enter their chosen foreign or colonial service permanently in some form or other, or, if that should fail, they send in their papers. Roughly speaking, the War Office retrieve only some fifty per cent of the seconded officers whom they allow to stray away from the home preserves of their units—and this is a heavy casualty list.

Peake had good reason to hope that he would succeed in getting into the Egyptian Army, because his uncle, Malcolm Peake, had served in it under Kitchener as officer commanding the artillery in the recent Sudan campaigns. It is doubtful whether Kitchener's fiercest detractors—if he has any—would venture to accuse him of nepotism, but he had an unwavering faith in his ability to select the right man. The appointment of men to the Egyptian Army of the nineties had been within his sole province, and he had sufficient confidence in the infallibility of his judgment to believe that a young relative of one of his personally selected and tried officers must *ipso facto* be endowed with qualities denied to other less fortunately connected men. However that may be, Peake's expectations

proved to be well-founded. He was posted to the Egyptian Army early in 1914, and shortly afterwards took ship to Port Said, to join his new command.

On his arrival at Port Said, as he was fighting his way through the inevitable hordes of hawkers, picture-postcard-sellers, fly-whisk-purveyors, bead-and-scarab-vendors, bootblacks, and newspaper-boys to the hotel where he proposed to lunch, he espied a small house in the main street, over the portals of which was inscribed the legend: "Egyptian Army." Under the impression that it would be correct to announce his arrival—and with an eye, perhaps, to the possibility of obtaining a free warrant for the railway journey to Cairo—he went in to report. He was conducted by an Egyptian orderly, to whom, needless to say, he had been quite unable to make himself understood, to the room of the officer-in-charge. This gentleman, who was found seated at a completely empty desk, drinking coffee and smoking a cigarette, seemed anything but pleased to see him. With the forced hospitality of the Orient, however, he rang the bell for a second cup, and, this formality having been observed, endeavoured to elucidate the mystery of his uninvited guest. The task was a difficult one, for Peake at that time spoke no Arabic and had only a smattering of French, whilst the Egyptian spoke no English and was as weak in French as his visitor. When at last it was made clear to him that this was no itinerant share-pusher, but a new recruit to the Egyptian Army, his whole demeanour changed. His face became wreathed in smiles, and he promised to do his best to help. This "best" proved to be an astonishingly efficient, energetic and painstaking piece of work. Before Peake knew what was happening, and in spite of his protests that he had not yet lunched, he found himself transported to the railway station, complete with every detail of his kit, which an army of uniformed minions collected from the quay, regardless of the fact that it had not yet been passed through the Customs. The indefatigable Egyptian then took Peake's ticket for him and pushed him into a train which was about to leave, giving the conductor vehement, not to say threatening and bloodthirsty instructions, to look after him well. It was unfortunate, of course, that the officer was under the impression that the destination of his charge was Alexandria and not Cairo, for at Benha Junction the faithful conductor literally and physically saw him off the train, and it was not until the guard's van had disappeared into the distance that he learned that it was the Cairo express from which he had been evicted and that the next train for that city—a slow one—was not due for three hours!

Having eventually reached Cairo, Peake reported to headquarters and was posted to the 4th Battalion of Infantry at Abbassia. (His first impression on joining that unit was, by the way, that it had achieved a degree of fossilization which rivalled even that of the army in India.) A fortnight after his arrival the British officer commanding the battalion went on leave to England and handed over the unit to the newcomer. This put Peake in a most invidious position, for he was still supremely ignorant of the ways of the Egyptian Army and spoke not a word of Arabic. Moreover, he had only eight years' service to his credit and boasted no war medals, whereas the senior Egyptian officer in the unit had over

thirty years' service and two rows of them. Luckily this experienced warrior appreciated the difficulty of the situation and readily fell in with Peake's proposal for its easement, which was in effect that he (the Egyptian) should command the battalion and run the orderly-room, whilst Peake would make himself responsible for the training. This somewhat unusual arrangement so won the Egyptian's admiration that Peake made a firm friend for life and in his subsequent service never visited Cairo without paying him a call.

The arrangement worked very smoothly, though, the Egyptian Army being essentially a conservative institution, there were moments of tension, when the novel ideas introduced by the newcomer ran foul of the pre-conceptions of the Higher Command, as for instance an occasion when Peake was discovered carrying out a field firing exercise with the independent use of the rifle and was severely "told off" by the British Officer Commanding Cairo District for his revolutionary tendencies. He was instructed laconically in future to adhere to the established form of drill, with its volley firing, which had been found most effective at the Battle of Omdurman and was therefore, it appeared, sacrosanct—presumably for all time.

This conservatism in the Egyptian Army—a polite name for ingrained obstinacy—gave rise to an amusing incident soon after the beginning of the 1914-18 war. From the earliest days it had been a standing order in the Cairo Military District that all British officers of the Egyptian Army should wear full mess kit when dining or dancing at any hotel in the city or its immediate surroundings. When Cairo was flooded with officers of all branches of the Imperial and Dominion forces at the beginning of the war, it was suggested, with due deference, to the G.O.C. Egyptian Army that the order might be rescinded in the interests of the junior officers, who felt uncomfortable and ill at ease in their blue and gold trappings among a crowd of colleagues dressed in everyday khaki. The proposal was rejected with contumely, and the unfortunate officers of the E.A. continued to endure of an evening a *malaise* analogous to that of the man who finds himself in full evening dress at a party where everyone else is wearing a dinner-jacket. The story, as related by Peake, reached its *dénouement* on the night of a big dance at Shepherd's Hotel. He and some of his fellow-officers were sitting out on the verandah with their dance partners when a very exalted member of the Staff of the Egyptian Army came out of the hotel in his smart mess kit. He descended the steps of the verandah to the street slowly and magnificently just as two Australian soldiers happened to stroll along. They stopped and gazed in astonishment at this strange and awe-inspiring apparition. Then one of them said in what could hardly be called a whisper: "Look, George, there goes the bloody bandmaster!"

The unpopular mess kit order was repealed a few days later. This was probably not the only occasion on which Antipodean candour succeeded—where politer methods had failed—in speeding up the obsequies of an outworn tradition.

This last winter before the war of 1914-18 was the gayest and most popular that Cairo had ever experienced. The habit of wintering abroad had been spreading rapidly among the more privileged classes in England, and in those days, except for the Riviera, there was no other place within



THE VILLAGE OF AKABA WITH THE GULF IN THE MIDDLE DISTANCE AND THE HIGHLANDS OF SINAI BEYOND



SHEIKH AUDAH ABU TAYI OF THE HOWIETAT TRIBE

easy reach where such comfortable quarters combined with so equable a winter climate could be found. The season of 1913-14 saw the greatest influx of tourists ever to have visited Cairo at one time. All the big hotels, from Heliopolis to Helouan, from Shepherd's to Mena, were crowded to capacity. Singers of the highest quality could be heard at the Opera House ; race-meetings were held twice a week at Gezira and Heliopolis ; there was polo by day and dining and dancing at night. Life in the Egyptian capital could in fact only be described as full—almost too full for a newly joined officer of the Egyptian Army endeavouring to learn his job.

Unfortunately for Egypt—from a financial point of view, if no other—the country never regained its old-time popularity after the war. The annual flow of winter tourists tailed off sadly and never again approached its pre-war figures. The reasons for this were not far to seek. In the first place a great number of other winter resorts had been opened up over an area stretching from the West Indies to Syria ; secondly, there were but few post-war Europeans who could face with equanimity the undeniable costliness of an Egyptian holiday ; and lastly, by an untimely dispensation of Providence, political upheavals, with risings in the Nile Valley, seemed always to occur just at the moment when these profitable migrants were making their plans for the winter. Since they were looking for peace above all things, they generally decided to give the country a wide berth.

Among the most popular social functions of that last gay Cairo season were the receptions held by Lord Kitchener at the British Agency, as the Embassy was then called. Every British officer in the Egyptian Army was certain of an invitation to one of these soon after he had joined, and Peake was no exception to the rule. He was invited to an Agency ball early in 1914. Lord Kitchener, when the new *bimbashi* was introduced to him, at once called to mind the Malcolm Peake who had been with him through the Sudan campaigns, and asked the young man to come and have a quiet talk with him later in the evening. This was an unexpected honour—and one that was not altogether welcome, for the High Commissioner had the reputation of being very brusque and overbearing. Peake was, as he frankly confesses, terrified at the thought of meeting him unsupported and spent the next half-hour or so nervously racking his brains for suitable subjects of conversation. He might have spared himself the trouble. Kitchener was most affable. He put the young man at his ease at once, told him anecdotes about his uncle Malcolm, and finally led him off on a tour of inspection of the Agency and the cabinets of treasures he had collected in the course of his adventurous life.

Peake attended several later receptions at the Agency and then, on the eve of his departure for the Sudan, left his card p.p.c. and entered his name in the visitors' book for the last time. On the following day he received a message that Lord Kitchener would like to see him before he left, and found, on obeying the summons, that the great man had sent for him merely to say good-bye and wish him the best of luck. There was on this occasion, says Peake, a quality of wistful sadness in the High Commissioner's demeanour which impressed him deeply. To quote his own words : "I almost felt that he envied me my good fortune. I was going to the country he loved, where he had made his name and reputation, whose very existence



as a prosperous state was due to his exertions ; whilst he was tied by his high office to Cairo. My experiences in the Sudan were about to begin ; his had already ended. He would have been more than human if he had succeeded in banishing all trace of envy from his farewells."

That was the last occasion on which these two men were destined to meet. Peake left Cairo next day to take up his duties in the Sudan. Kitchener returned to England on leave a month later, and in August, 1914, was appointed Secretary of State for War. He perished when H.M.S. *Hampshire* foundered in June, 1916.

## CHAPTER II

### SUDAN AND SALONICA—AND TORPEDOED!

"As happy prologues to the swelling act of the Imperial theme." (*Shakespeare.*)

IN APRIL, 1914, PEAKE LEFT THE FLESHPOTS OF EGYPT FOR THE SUDAN, AND was posted to the 4th Battalion at Sennar, some distance south of Khartum. His battalion had been detailed to guard a camp of Egyptian convicts engaged in digging a canal, which formed part of a new irrigation scheme. These men had been transferred to the Sudan by order of Lord Kitchener, who had recently inspected the Egyptian prisons and, finding them overcrowded and lacking in provision for the useful occupation of their inhabitants, had decided to kill two birds with one stone by packing off a thousand of the worst cases to the Sudan, where they would enjoy more space and less leisure.

It was the fashion to regard these prisoners as dangerous, and the officers of the guard, when on duty, were always accompanied by two armed soldiers. Actually, Peake says, these precautions were quite unnecessary. The convicts were a most likable crowd, with many highly educated gentlemen among them. A striking feature of prisons in the East is the number of charming personalities to be found among their inmates. Indeed, it is often difficult to believe that such delightful characters can really have earned the sentences inflicted on them. One of the convicts at Sennar—a most attractive fellow according to Peake—had been awarded fifteen years' penal servitude for a misguided attempt to provide the police with evidence in a difficult case by forcing a promising (but reluctant) witness to sit on the pointed end of a tent-peg. Unfortunately for all concerned the witness had expired before any useful information could be elicited, and the police had then most ungratefully rounded on their would-be assistant, who discovered too late that excellence of intention is no excuse for failure in performance.

Another prepossessing young convict was serving a term merely for having emulated, admittedly on rather cruder lines, the window-dressing habits of some of our shrewdest financiers. His particular method of "salting the pyrites" was that of filing down a number of 100-piastre pieces,

sprinkling the resulting dust among the sand-dunes by the Pyramids and then persuading gullible tourists to have a flutter in what, as their own eyes testified, was obviously a gold-mine. It seems almost incredible that even the most inexperienced fish should have allowed itself to be hooked by so palpable a lure, but the catch was in fact a surprisingly large one. The beauty of the scheme, from the promoter's point of view, lay of course in its relative security. The young company promoter was careful to select his dupes only from among genuine tourists, who would be well out of the country long before a budding gold-mine could be expected to reach the production stage, and he banked rightly on their being either too lazy or too ashamed to institute proceedings when he failed to deliver the goods. He was laid by the heel at last by an old lady who had surrendered her jewel-case in lieu of the hard cash usually demanded for shares, and who came all the way back to Egypt to retrieve it.

But the greatest personality of all in the camp was the Egyptian Staff Officer. Not only in personality was he great, but also, what was more readily observable, in bulk. Evidence of this latter characteristic is provided in a story told by Peake concerning a pair of smartly-cut Stohwasser leggings he was wearing, and which the Egyptian admired greatly. Peake kindly offered to get him a similar pair, but, on the required measurements being sent to London, the makers declined to execute the order until the figures had been confirmed. They had never heard, or dreamed, of a calf of such dimensions, and were under the impression that a waist-measurement must have been sent by mistake.

This officer had an enormously fat white pony on which he used to ride round the camp, and which used to sag visibly in the middle whenever he mounted it. It had never been known to go out of a walk, partly no doubt because of the load it carried, but chiefly because an essential part of the officer's equestrian equipment was of a kind that had perforce to follow on foot. This was a strong wooden chair, which was carried by an orderly and placed in position whenever the rider, as happened frequently during a tour of the camp, wished to dismount. Nor would he, without its aid, have ever regained his seat in the saddle.

When the rains broke and Sennar began to get unhealthy, Peake received orders to move the whole camp to Dongola. The transfer was accomplished without incident, the only colour lent to an otherwise dull proceeding being Peake's own personal attire during the journey. It appears that on the night before the move, when everything was packed up ready for transit, he went to sleep on his camp-bed outside a small hut, in which he had undressed and where all his kit was piled. In the early hours of the morning he was awakened by the sound of persons removing his boxes, but, thinking it was the fatigue-party who had been ordered to take the camp baggage down to the railway station, he turned over and went to sleep again. He wished afterwards that he had been more alert, for the intruders had in fact been thieves, and so effectually had they done their job that when he got up in the morning he had literally nothing to put on. He had to borrow clothing where he could, and arrived in Khartum, that citadel of immaculately tailored officers, in the ill-fitting and far from spotless uniform of an Egyptian private.

The only interesting incident during Peake's short stay at Dongola followed the receipt of a note from the Inspector, or Assistant District Commissioner, who wrote to say that he was sending along a person who wished to lodge a complaint. The perusal of the letter synchronized exactly with the arrival of the complainant—an occurrence of such frequency in the East that one is inclined to ascribe it to something more than pure coincidence ; very probably a trifling financial transaction between visitor and orderly is involved—a man can hardly “be out” to a caller when he has just accepted delivery of a letter announcing his approach. In this case the visitor was a woman—a remarkably good-looking woman of middle age, whose confident, almost imperial, bearing indicated a position of more than ordinary consequence. She proved to be one Rodeena, the wife of the Sheikh of the tribe occupying the land round Dongola. Respectfully, but forcibly, she submitted her complaint—its exact nature is not recalled—and Peake was so fortunate in his manner of meeting it that she became his firm friend, and assisted him on many occasions in his dealings with the local people. The incident in itself may seem to have been hardly worth recording ; its interest for Peake lay in the remarkable character of Rodeena, whose history he subsequently learned. It appears that, during the period of the Mahdi's rebellion and occupation of the Sudan, her husband's people had been hostile to the British. After the Battle of Omdurman Kitchener, by way of retribution, had had him removed from the headship of his tribe. The Sheikh himself had accepted his degradation with equanimity as being but the fortune of war. Not so the imperious Rodeena. She made a bee-line for Cairo and requested, nay demanded, an interview with the Sirdar, which having been refused, she staked a claim on the steps of the War Office and sat there day after day from dawn to dusk, until finally Kitchener, his curiosity aroused by such persistence, stopped one morning and asked her what it was she wanted. She replied that she wished to speak with him alone on a private matter and, on being admitted to his office, begged him to reinstate her husband in his Sheikhship, guaranteeing that if he did so she herself would in fact rule the tribe and take full responsibility for its good behaviour. This suggestion—rather a startling one in a Mahommedan country, where women have always sounded a subdued note and are strictly excluded from male concerns—appealed to Kitchener, who had been considerably impressed by Rodeena's regal bearing. He granted her request, and she returned to Dongola, where she took charge with such effect that no further trouble ever occurred in that area. Rodeena remained in Peake's memory as one of the outstanding personalities of his acquaintance. Her sphere of influence may have been small, but in it she ruled like a wise autocrat. Her absolute authority was never questioned by the savage-looking tribesmen she controlled.

Early in 1915 Peake's battalion, which was now under the command of Kaimakam Eric Stephenson Bey, returned to Khartum North. It was now that the British officers of the Egyptian Army began to agitate for a return to their units and a chance of seeing service in France or elsewhere, an understandable ambition, but one which gave rise to considerable embarrassment. It is one of the drawbacks of the seconding system that, at the very time when the repercussions of a large-scale war render the

efficient officering of native units doubly important, a drain on the command of these units begins to set in. Seconded officers immediately demand to be returned to their regiments in the firing-line, and feel ill-used if the request is refused. In this particular instance an arrangement was made whereby certain officers were allowed to go to the Sinai and Dardanelles fronts for short periods, which were to count as their annual leave—a concession which was really more or less in the nature of a sop to keep them quiet. Some of them never returned ; a few were retained almost forcibly by the British Army, which refused to release them in any circumstances, and a considerable number were killed, among them Peake's commanding officer, Stephenson. Peake, who had not yet succeeded in getting released, was thus left in command of the 4th Battalion and remained in Khartum for the whole of 1915.

In December of that year, having made himself a nuisance with his repeated applications for transfer elsewhere, he was sent to the Western Arab Corps at Gedaref. The Abyssinians were at that time very troublesome on the border, and Peake was detailed with a small body of men to try and catch some of their slave- and cattle-raiding parties. The work was exciting, but utterly fruitless, for the whole country was so thick with trees and jungle growth that a capture was practically impossible. Peake's men engaged in constant brushes with the raiders, but after the exchange of a few rifle-shots the elusive enemy would invariably disappear into the forest, from which there was not the slightest prospect of expelling him.

Peake was just beginning to get weary of hunting the uncatchable when the situation blew up on the Darfur front. The Sultan of Darfur, Ali Dinar, had entered into an intrigue with the Senussi of the Libyan Desert of Egypt and Italian Cyrenaica, who were planning an attack on Egypt from the west. The Senussi are not a tribe, but members of an extremely devout sect of the Mahommedan faith founded early in the nineteenth century by a religious sheikh of the oasis of Jarabub, and this man had endeavoured to proselytize the whole of the north of Africa. Practically all the inhabitants of Cyrenaica and Tripoli were converts to his particular and puritan brand of the faith, together with many of the Egyptian Libyan tribes and the people of the Egyptian oases, and their influence spread gradually through the oases of Kufra to the Tibesti country and to Darfur. The Senussi had organized the present rising in order to strike a blow at Great Britain as an ally of the Italians, against whom they had been fighting for several years. Having during the early part of the war practically driven the Italians from their country and penned them up in fenced cities on the coast, they were now looking round for fresh worlds to conquer—and Egypt and the Sudan were the most convenient.

As soon as the rebellion came to a head Peake was transferred to the Camel Corps—the ambition of every British officer in the Egyptian Army—and took over command of No. 5 Company, then at Wad Medani, but under orders to march to Camel Corps H.Q. at El Obeid in Kordofan. At El Obeid he found preparations in full swing for a further march to a place called Nahud, some hundred and twenty miles to the west and only a short distance from the Darfur boundary. There was a difficulty about this march in that the country to be traversed was wholly destitute of wells.

Sufficient water for the men would be obtainable from the Tebeldi trees, whose hollowed trunks are used as small reservoirs during the rainy season, but there would be no chance of watering the camels until Nahud was reached. This would not have troubled the Camel Corps unduly had they been undertaking the march by themselves; but accompanied, as they were to be, by infantry they would, of course, have to reduce their speed to that of a foot-soldier (about twelve miles a day in that difficult country), and were thus faced with the prospect of ten waterless days for their mounts.

In order to get the camels into training for this test of endurance, the authorities laid down that, during the preparatory period at El Obeid, the length of time between waterings should gradually be increased to ten days. The animals did increase their powers of abstinence, but their thirst during the process became such that they made the air hideous with their protests; what is more, owing to the dryness of their mouths they had the greatest difficulty in swallowing food and rapidly lost condition, with the result that, when the long march came, though they just managed to stay the course, most of them died soon afterwards. These animals need never have been lost had the authorities listened to the advice of the Arabs, who are real camel-masters, and who would never have countenanced the methods adopted.

Nahud had been selected as the jumping-off place for the expeditionary force against Darfur, and the column was put under the command of Lewa P. J. V. Kelly Pasha, later Brigadier-General, with Mr. H. A. MacMichael as Political Officer and Miralai Huddleston Bey as commander of the Camel Corps. (Both the latter have maintained their connection with the Middle East. MacMichael—now Sir Harold MacMichael—is High Commissioner of Palestine, while Huddleston is Governor-General of the Sudan.) The force marched by easy stages through Umm Shanka and Hilla to Abyad, at all of which places water was to be found. Umm Shanka is particularly rich in this valuable commodity. It was one of the halting-places on the old Central African slave route in the days when Zubair Pasha of Gordon's time was engaged in this questionable, but lucrative, traffic, and the remains of at least ninety wells testify to the size of the caravans of captive negroes which must have passed that way in the sixties and seventies of the last century. At Hilla there are only two wells, both of them about two hundred feet deep. Their origin is as great a mystery as the method of their construction. The excavator who sank them, whoever he may have been, must have had an unbounded confidence in his divining powers to encourage him to bore through thirty feet of soft sand and one hundred and seventy feet of solid rock in order to gain his ends.

During the march from Hilla to Abyad the enemy was sighted for the first time—a few horsemen who showed themselves on a distant ridge. At once a square was formed in the old Sudan Fuzzy-wuzzy style, and it was then that an incident occurred which opened Peake's eyes to the justice of the reprimand he had received from the O.C. Cairo District when he had ventured to modernize the Egyptian Army's fire drill. A Sudanese battalion on the left face of the square suddenly opened fire and continued to shoot rapidly long after the horsemen had disappeared from view, in spite of the strenuous efforts of their officers to stop them. This undisciplined display

was due to the natural excitability of the Sudanese soldier, who, unless strict volley-firing is enforced, persists in loosing off his entire supply of ammunition at his first encounter with the enemy.

Peake had the ill luck to be out on patrol when the decisive battle of Beringia took place, and so missed the engagement which virtually brought the campaign to a close. It was fought on much the same lines as Omdurman and other battles of the wars against the Mahdi. The Anglo-Egyptian column had been marching, since leaving Nahud, in loose square formation, but was ready, of course, to close its ranks at a moment's notice in the event of an attack. Nothing, however, was seen of the enemy (except small scouting parties such as that encountered at Abyad) until Beringia was reached. There a company of the Camel Corps, who were patrolling ahead of the main column in thick bush, ran into an ambush. Some wild shooting, which did little damage, ensued, and then about four thousand Arabs broke cover, brandishing swords, spears and rifles, and dashed wildly at the Anglo-Egyptian square, which had hurriedly been formed at the sound of the first shots. The Camel Corps, moving at something more than the regulation marching pace, just succeeded in regaining the main body before the storm broke. After that it was a repetition of Omdurman, with the enemy charging again and again at the square and being mown down by volleys from the 13th and 14th Sudanese and the British machine-gunners, until, having lost over five hundred killed, including their leader, Ramadan, they drew off. This battle ended the organized resistance of the enemy, and the campaign was brought to a close shortly afterwards, when the Sultan Ali Dinar was killed at Jebel Marra and the remainder of his followers were rounded up.

Peake entered Fashar a day or two after the occupation, but remained there only for a short time, since the men of his company were mostly due for discharge, and he had been ordered to take them back to El Obeid whence they would continue their march to their headquarters at Wad Medani; whilst he himself took train to Khartum, bound for Cairo and leave in the United Kingdom. From the west of Fashar to railhead at El Obeid is a distance of about five hundred miles. Peake, determined not to miss a train which in those days ran only once a week, allowed what he thought would be ample time to enable him to catch it, but, either owing to a mistaken impression as to the date of its running, or because he lost count of the number of days spent on the march, he failed to connect and had the mortification of seeing the train steam out of El Obeid station when his column was still two miles away. There was nothing for it but to sit down and wait for the next—and when a man is pining to exchange the dry heat of the Sudan for cool English breezes, which he has not smelt for three long years, a week's delay assumes the proportions of eternity.

Arrived in Cairo, with three months' leave in hand and the satisfactory sensation of being a free man for that length of time at least, Peake changed his mind about returning to England and went instead to G.H.Q., where he asked to be sent to Salonica, which had been occupied by a combined British and French force in October, 1915, and where he hoped to see active service against the Bulgarians. One can only suppose that the staff officers whom he interviewed were ignorant of his attachment to the Egyptian

Army ; otherwise they would hardly have acceded to his request as readily as they did. Peake was himself surprised at their complaisance and, fearing a reversal of their decision, resolved to get away on the first boat available. Thus it was that he took passage from Alexandria on a small transport carrying mules, on which the only other soldier-passenger was Lieut.-Colonel G. Dawes, who was on his way to take command of the Royal Flying Corps at Salonica and who, on learning that Peake was at a loose end, offered to take him into that service. Peake jumped at the proposal and on arrival at Salonica was posted to No. 17 Squadron, in which he acted as Observer until he was made adjutant of the Wing. In all he spent about five months in the R.F.C., two months more than the period of his leave, and was just beginning to hope, either that he had been forgotten by the Egyptian Army, or that the unorthodox circumstances of his departure had obscured his tracks, when he received a curt summons to G.H.Q. in Salonica, and, on reporting there, was asked by a very fierce and martial "red-tab" whether he realized that it was a serious offence to absent one's self from one's unit on active service. Peake, knowing that the Egyptian Army was in fact *not* on active service, was able to counter this inquiry by asking whether it was an equally serious offence to be on active service whilst absenting one's self from one's unit which was not—a question to which there was obviously only one answer. His fierce interrogator relented, and the two parted on the best of terms after Peake had promised to return to Alexandria on a transport sailing that day.

On reaching Cairo he was at once ordered back to the Camel Corps then in Darfur, but some miles short of Nahud he was thrown by a stumbling camel, landing on his head and dislocating his neck—an accident which in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred would have proved fatal. He was carried to El Obeid, where for many weary months he lay on his back with his neck in plaster of paris, and it was not until the spring of 1917 that he was in a fit state to be moved to Khartum. Here by chance, on leave from the Egyptian Expeditionary Force, was a specialist in spinal complaints who, hearing of Peake's condition, kindly offered his professional services. Peake, no longer tied to his bed, but still in the greatest discomfort (he had to wear a specially high stiff collar to support his head which without it, fell forward and could not be drawn back), at once went round to see him. The specialist's verdict was depressing. He told Peake that he had unquestionably dislocated his neck at the fourth vertebra, that nothing could be done about it, that he would have to resign himself to living the rest of his life with a disconnected and unmanageable head, and that any carelessness on his part would probably finish him off altogether. He further advised him to dispense with his high collar—advice which Peake, since the thing was most uncomfortable, followed on the instant, with remarkable consequences which neither the specialist nor anyone else could have foreseen. What happened was this. Peake, desperately unhappy in the realization that he was a useless creak for life, left the specialist's house and walked to the Sudan Club, access to which was in those days gained by way of a drive which bifurcated round an island of bushes as it approached the entrance. On this island grew a low-branched thorny tree of the acacia variety, and into this tree Peake, chin on chest owing to the absence of the

supporting collar, crashed blindly. The shock pulled him up short ; there was a horrible grating snap inside his neck, a pang of acute agony, and he fell half-conscious to the ground. He was picked up and carried into the Club, and on recovering sufficiently to speak asked to be taken back to the specialist whom he had so recently left. The latter re-examined him, but was unwilling to hazard a diagnosis without an X-ray photograph to guide him. This meant a journey to Cairo, and Peake was duly shipped off on a stretcher, with strict injunctions not to move his head as he valued his life. In those days the journey from Khartum to Cairo by rail and steamer took a week or more, and long before it was over his neck began to feel so much more comfortable and his spirits so much higher that he decided to take a chance on it, to disobey orders and have done with his miserable stretcher. When the train drew into Cairo station he was so far recovered that he was able to get himself and his kit out on to the platform without assistance. Here he saw two nurses, with stretcher-bearers in attendance, diligently searching the interior of each coach in turn for a desperate case of broken neck, which might or might not have survived the jolting of the long railway journey. To these two he now made himself known.

All those who have been in hospital will know what a shocking thing it is for a patient to disobey the orders of a doctor in the smallest degree and "hell hath no fury like a woman scorned" describes very adequately the attitude of the professional nursing sister who catches a patient in an act of disobedience. Peake says he will never forget the fury of the senior sister when she discovered that the desperate case she had come to handle was the more or less robust-looking officer, whom she had just seen bundling his baggage out of his compartment, would have been laughable if it had not been so discommoding. She would admit no excuse, listen to no argument. Peake had been listed as a cot case ; a cot case he would have to be. Willy-nilly he was replaced on his stretcher and conveyed solemnly and with infinite care to the Citadel Hospital, where an immediate X-ray examination revealed to a highly astonished medical staff that there was nothing wrong with him whatever ! His neck was absolutely normal again. The acacia tree had performed successfully an operation which no specialist in the world would even have attempted !

Peake was now granted six weeks' sick leave, which he decided to spend in India. Infrequency of war-time sailings compelled him to make a brief stay in Alexandria, where he put up at the Casino Hotel. The hotel was over-full, and one day in a packed grill-room the head waiter, with due apologies, dumped another officer at his table. The two men entered into conversation in the course of which it transpired that the intruder, too, was going on sick leave.

"What was your illness ?" asked Peake.

"Oh, it wasn't an illness," was the reply, "it was a damned nasty accident—one which ought by rights to have finished up with a funeral. I came off my horse and broke my neck !"

Here, indeed, was coincidence at its most fantastic—that out of all the thousands of officers in the British Army two, probably the only two, who had broken their necks and got away with it, should meet fortuitously at a luncheon-table in an Alexandria hotel !



Agra was the spot in which Peake elected to spend his sick leave. He spent it restfully, having no great hankering for social entertainment after his recent experiences. Indeed, he became temporarily something of a recluse and spent most of his time rubbing up his Hindustani by conversing with Indians whom he met in the gardens of the Taj Mahal. As mentioned in a previous chapter, his familiarity with this language was of considerable service to him later on during Lawrence's campaign, when the Indian troops involved often lacked the benefit of an interpreter, and were hard put to it to voice their needs or understand those of their fellow-campaigners; as, for instance, a company of stocky little Gurkhas who were required to learn the art of managing camels—a type of animal they had never before seen or imagined—and who, but for Peake's assistance, might well have boggled at the task. At no time has he ever regretted the long hours spent in the study of these Eastern tongues.

After his leave in India he returned to duty at Wad Medani and here contracted an abscess on the liver—the aftermath of an attack of dysentery suffered at Ambala. On recovery he was sent to England for seven weeks to convalesce, and on the expiry of his leave set out on his return journey to Egypt—a journey which proved to be at once the dulllest, the most irritating, and the most eventful he had ever undertaken. The French railways functioned but fitfully in those war days. Trains to the Mediterranean coast proceeded at a snail's pace, with interminable halts, at every known and many an unknown station, and took the best part of a week to cover a distance which a peace-time express from the Gare de Lyon would have accomplished between dinner and breakfast. This was the dull part of the journey. Then came an interval of fourteen days at a rest camp in Marseilles, where the commandant, a real live Colonel Blimp of the type which has proved such a godsend to cartoonists, aroused the anger and derision of his charges by an insistence on "lick, spit and polish" transcending that of the dubious General Martinet himself. This was the irritating part. The eventful part now followed, to wit the voyage across the Mediterranean in the S.S. *Aragon* during a period of intense local U-boat activity. After dodging all over this inland sea, round the wrong side of Sicily and the African side of Pantellaria, the ship finally made Malta, where she remained for some days. Then came a dash for Alexandria which was interrupted by a well-aimed torpedo just as the low-lying Egyptian coast came into sight. The *Aragon*, a large vessel of between 16,000 and 20,000 tons, sank slowly, and there was time for the accomplishment of some very able rescue work. As many as five hundred of the ship's company had been taken off by an attendant destroyer when she too was torpedoed. This double disaster resulted in the loss of about nine hundred men, and a large number of nurses and V.A.D.'s who were on their way to Alexandria for duty with the Egyptian Expeditionary Force.

Peake was acting as second-in-command of one of the lower decks, the O.C. being a major, who had been seriously shell-shocked in France, and who was on his way out to a quiet job in Ceylon where he hoped to recover his health. The ordeal of being torpedoed was a severe test for a man in his condition, and it proved too much for him. When the order to abandon ship came down from the bridge he lost his head completely and refused to

leave. Nothing Peake could say had the slightest effect on him ; he remained obstinately immovable. Time was getting short. The ship was settling rapidly. All the men from that deck had gone over the side in their life-belts, and only Peake and a sergeant of the Guards Brigade remained to expostulate with the hysterical major. They tried cajolery ; they tried threats. It was all to no purpose. He flatly declined to budge.

"What do we do now ?" asked Peake of the sergeant.

"Well, there's only one thing for it, sir," replied that resourceful man. "You take his legs and I'll take his arms, and we'll chuck him overboard."

So it came about that possibly for the first time in history a captain and a sergeant of the British Army conspired together to throw a Field Officer into the sea. The plan was no sooner conceived than carried out. Overboard went the major, and the shock of the sudden immersion so stimulated his flagging nerve that he struck out and succeeded in reaching a trawler, which picked him up and conveyed him to safety. News came later, however, that he died shortly after his arrival in Ceylon. Peake and the sergeant now followed the victim of their conspiracy into the water and, after five hours in a bitterly cold sea, were also picked up by a trawler and brought into Alexandria, which they reached just as it was getting dark.

It was then that a pleasing little incident occurred which still remains vivid in Peake's memory. As he walked out of the dock gates, dripping wet and shuddering with cold, he was hailed by an Egyptian *arbagi* (cabman). It would be perhaps unjust to say that in the average *arbagi* you find a representative of the dregs of the Egyptian nation, but, on the other hand, he hardly represents the cream of it. He is something of a rarity, of course, in this era of taxis, but in those days his number was legion and his lot was hard. He belonged to a rather despised class, his income was meagre—often barely sufficient to meet his horse's forage bill—and his nature in consequence unaccommodating. He could not afford to be either compassionate or generous. But the man whose vehicle Peake now hired proved that even an *arbagi* was capable of finer feelings. Observing the miserable condition of his fare, he descended from his box, took off his own poor overcoat, and insisted that Peake should wear it. Then, mounting to his seat in his thin cotton garment, he drove off through the cold night air. Nor was this all. When they reached the hotel and Peake asked him to wait whilst he obtained money from the manager for his fare, he flatly refused payment. Cracking his whip, he rattled off into the darkness before even his number could be taken. Despised Egyptian cabby he may have been, but, as in the case of so many of his race, the blood of some nomad Arab ancestor must have coursed in his veins—the blood of a desert people in whose complex nature the attribute of hospitality, in its best sense, dominated all meaner qualities, which compelled him to show courtesy and generosity to a distressed wayfarer.

## CHAPTER III

## WITH LAWRENCE'S ARAB ARMY

"Nothing is more calculated to disorganize and ruin an army altogether than plundering." (*Napoleon's Maxims.*)

IN JANUARY, 1918, PEAKE RETURNED TO EGYPT FROM LEAVE IN ENGLAND and received orders to go to El Arish, in Sinai, to take over the command of a force of Arab Scouts, which had been raised in the Sudan for service with Feisal's army operating east of Jordan. At that period of the war Allenby's main force had just completed its drive northwards after the brilliantly successful third battle of Gaza, and he was holding a line that ran from the River Auja, north of Jaffa, through the centre of Palestine to the hills well north of Jerusalem. Jericho and its bridgehead over the Jordan at Ghoraniysh were not taken until a month later, but at that time Allenby was fully aware of the assistance Feisal's Arab army could render in future operations, and at the back of his mind was the hope that the Arabs would in the near future capture Amman in Trans-Jordan, and thus link up with the extreme right of the British line.

At the time Peake went to Sinai to take over his new command this objective was still very much in the air, for the Turks were holding the Hedjaz railway as far south as Maan and, in an intermittent fashion, as far as Medina, though subjected to constant raids by Beduin tribesmen, and the only striking success that had been achieved was the capture from the Turks of the small port of Akaba, which in all further operations proved a most useful base for supplies and reinforcements. Except for the roundabout way to Akaba there was no direct communication between the Arabs east of Jordan and Allenby's army. Between the two lay that great cleft in the earth's surface—the Dead Sea depression, which runs from Tiberias to the Gulf of Akaba and is at the Dead Sea itself some 1,200 feet below the sea level. On either side of this great valley rise precipitous rocky mountains impassable for all wheeled traffic, except via the Wadi Nimrin to Es Salt, and this stretch of wide broken country, unbearably hot and malaria-ridden in summer, constituted a most effective barrier to direct communications.

The so-called Arab Scouts Peake was sent to command had been recruited hurriedly from Sudanese and other Arabs, and were being employed in Sinai on quite unnecessary patrols and police work along the newly-made railway. The officer in command was in hospital when Peake arrived and the young subaltern in temporary charge of the force had not been notified of the arrival of his successor. This caused some resentment, and an appeal was made to the local commandant, who had also received no instructions about a change of command. In the circumstances he was unable to recognize Peake until definite orders came through, but as he did not believe in idleness he suggested that Peake should occupy his time helping him with a collection of desert flowers he was making. For the next five days or so, whilst awaiting orders, Peake wandered over the desert searching for new specimens of the delightful little flowers that spring up after the

rains on the sandy wastes, and also keeping a watchful eye on the scrub bushes for that mysterious reptile, the chameleon, in which the horticulturally-minded commandant was also interested. Eventually Cairo headquarters came to life and a telegram was received confirming Peake's appointment, whereupon he took over command of the force which he called the strangest unit in the British Army.

After a day or two spent in El Arish coping with the complexities of this queer body of men, Peake announced his intention of proceeding to Kosseima, a well-watered spot some sixty miles to the south, where the main body of the force was encamped. On arrival at Kosseima—a march he made in one day on a fast-trotting camel—he was received by a guard of honour consisting of some fifty bearded Arabs and Sudanese. It would have been a most impressive guard if it had been mounted on its *hageens* (riding camels), which were magnificent animals of the white Bishareen type, but as they preferred to receive him on foot the effect was not so good for, beyond the fact that each man was standing on his feet and grasping a rifle, there was no semblance of drill and the "Present Arms" was accompanied by the clatter of falling firearms.

A quick review of this corps revealed the fact that no establishment for non-commissioned officers had been allowed, and there were none. No training had ever been suggested, and the physical fitness of the soldier had not been considered either desirable or necessary as most of the men were well over military age. One way and another Peake did not feel very hopeful of the future efficiency of his new command, but he endeavoured to do his best with the material at his disposal. When, however, a week later he announced the reason of his arrival, which was to take the force to the Hedjaz, the news was not greeted with the enthusiasm that might have been expected. The following day a deputation of the Arabs waited on him to explain that they had been enlisted to guard the Kantara-Rafa railway, and that they had no intention whatsoever of doing any training, nor of going to the Hedjaz. Moreover, they stated they had already appointed a committee, and they demanded it should be sent to Cairo to enable them to lay their grievances before headquarters.

Peake, who had by this time realized that nothing could be made of this very scallywag force that had started all wrong, welcomed the idea of the committee, as it was obvious that the general appearance and tone of the deputation would fully confirm the report he was writing on his new command. Without this ocular demonstration of inefficiency and aural confession of insubordination it might have been difficult for him to impress upon the Staff the truth of his report, which, on account of the short time he had been with the unit, might have been considered too hasty. The deputation, therefore, set forth triumphantly, bearing Peake's report with them, and almost immediately afterwards a telegram from Cairo was received ordering him to march his men into El Arish, and there disband them for return to their villages in the Sudan. As Peake says, the order to march for disbandment was the only one he ever gave this weird force that was received without grumbling or resentment.

This account of the short-lived Arab Scouts tends to give a false impression of the martial spirit and general military efficiency of the Sudanese as a

race. Handled properly on first enlistment they make invariably first-class soldiers, and insubordination is almost unheard of. They are, however, a most child-like, simple people and to enlist a force of raw recruits in this fashion, with no organization for non-commissioned officers and a complete absence of general discipline to begin with, is calculated to have much the same effect as would the starting of a new public school with no masters and no fixed hours for work.

Immediately after he had finished disbanding his first command, Peake received orders to go to Beersheba to take over a detachment of the newly-formed Egyptian Army Camel Corps. There has always been a Camel Corps in the Egyptian Army, but it has never been an Egyptian unit as the men serving in it are invariably Sudanese, and the formation of a corps of cameliers from the Egyptian infantry battalions was a new experiment. This force, intended originally to form an Arabic-speaking gendarmerie on lines of communication, had been created in the usual army fashion by calling on various battalion commanders to detail a quota of men to be trained in the new unit. It is a system that by this time higher authorities should have realized is open to abuse—and very natural abuse—for a battalion commander, receiving an order of this description, regards it merely as an act of God inspired with the sole object of enabling him to get rid of all the undesirables in his unit. Human nature is human nature, even in armies, and to ask a colonel to send away from his battalion a detachment of his best and most reliable men is to ask in vain. The only thing one can say is that if the result is unfortunate in the infantry it is inconceivably worse in the cavalry, for unfortunately that noble animal, the horse, creates around him a lamentably low state of morals, and when a cavalry officer is, or was, asked to send away ten of his best horses to another unit his selection, ably assisted by squadron commanders, sergeant-majors and farrier sergeants, suggested he had weeded out animals for the knacker's yard. A cavalry colonel's trouble in the past was to obtain permission to cast a certain number of horses unfit for service, and this permission was grudgingly granted. A call for carefully-selected horses for another unit solved the casting difficulty, and, if anyone raised a question later, the accusation of lack of careful selection could not be made.

For these reasons Peake found the newly-formed Egyptian Camel Corps not quite up to the general standard of the Egyptian Army, which is a high one, and some weeding out and reorganization was necessary before he was in a position to move. The establishment of a regular Camel Corps unit consists of four sections of forty men to a company, and the company is commanded by a *bimbashi*, a Turkish rank adopted by the Egyptian Army which is equal to a major in our own. The men are mounted on *hageens* (riding camels), as opposed to *hamla* or baggage camels, and their normal pace when marching is an easy shambling trot, which if an animal is a good pacer is extremely comfortable for the rider. Each section is accompanied by four trotting *hamla* animals, which carry reserve rations and forage for the section, and allowing for a five-minute halt every hour as a breather the Camel Corps can average five miles an hour with ease and a day's march of forty miles. If necessary, it is possible to increase this considerably, but longer marches cannot be indulged in indefinitely as the old

camel, an uncomplaining, willing beast, must spend nearly half his day grazing on the harsh dry scrub of the desert if he is to maintain his condition. The value of the Camel Corps lies in the fact that it carries its own water and supplies for seven days, and thus is a unit that is more or less self-contained. If water is to be found on its line of march the period which it can remain in the field without assistance from the commissariat can be extended to fourteen, even twenty, days, and in a desert campaign this factor is of the very greatest value.

On the 1st April Peake received orders to take his force to Akaba, where he was to join Feisal's army, and he marched it down the old frankincense road through the Wadi Araba, which in the days of Solomon saw a constant stream of caravans, but which, except for nomad Beduins, had not been used since the days of the Romans. He found it a rough track, bisected every half-mile or so by deep wadis running down from the eastern mountains through a harsh no-man's-land where water was scarce and brackish when found, and nothing grew except the thorny scrub growths of the desert.

Owing to the fact that his route had been planned for him by some member of the Staff, who had a very vague idea of the country south of Beer-sheba, Peake, instead of marching straight down the Wadi Araba on an easy track, inclined to the west and, ascending the Sinai highlands, camped on the night of the 7th at Ras el Nagb—the Head of the Pass—where the Sinai mountains fall away suddenly to the sea. The digression cost him two days' extra marching, but on the other hand it enabled him to obtain his first view of his future home for the next twenty-one years across a stretch of striking and wonderfully coloured scenery that has possibly no equal in the world. On leaving camp the following morning he led his column over a rocky rise, and there, stretching for miles some 2,000 feet below him, he saw the whole expanse of the Wadi Araba in varying shades of primrose and pink undulating into the haze of the morning, and to the south the intense blue of the Gulf of Akaba, while, to complete the strange contrast of colour, there ran on the far side of the depression the high serrated purple ridge of the mountains of Edom with Gebel Harun (Mount Hor—the burial-place of Aaron) towering above them.

The little sleepy port of Akaba, which has a normal population of about four hundred and two dug-out canoes, presented a strange sight of military and naval activity when Peake arrived there with his column on April 9, 1918. There were ships lying in the anchorage and unloading stores, including boxes of golden sovereigns; on a newly cleared aerodrome west of the town several aeroplanes were standing; the whole foreshore was crowded with tentage—the white E.P. and bell tents of the British headquarters, the ornate oriental tents of Feisal and his staff, and spread out all over the plain the black goat-hair *beyts* of the assembled Beduin, of whom there were an incredible number, so many, in fact, that Peake concluded it must be ration day when food was distributed to the tribesmen, as normally they were not available in any great number. Readers of *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* will recall that one of Lawrence's great difficulties was raising sufficient men from the tribes for the successful carrying out of raids, though there was no trouble about a satisfactory muster when it was a question

of pay or food. This was due in large measure to the fact that there is one thought paramount in the Beduin's mind—the grazing of his camels and flocks of goats and sheep. For fear of raids from other tribes, who would not be above carrying off a few animals from an old enemy even if that enemy was fighting alongside of him for the freedom of the Arab race, he brought his whole entourage with him on active service. Immediately a big gathering of Beduin assembled the all important question of sufficient grazing arose, and nothing would prevent whole families trekking off a hundred miles or so to some spot where the rainfall had provided a fresh growth of scrub and some green fodder.

Peake's arrival coincided with breakfast-time and he was asked into H.Q. mess, where he was most surprised and horrified to see what he thought was a Beduin sheikh, in the flowing robes and headdress of the Arab race, and of course a devout Mahommedan, making a meal of bacon and eggs. He discovered that this was one of the British officers serving with the Arab force, and at the time there were many.

After breakfast he returned to his own small unit to see to the pitching of tents on the seashore, and this camp on Egyptian Army orderly lines—in marked contrast to the haphazard arrangements of the canvas in its vicinity—had just been completed when one of the N.C.O.s announced that a party of Arabs had come to see him. The following are Peake's own words describing his first meeting with that great and remarkable personality, Lawrence of Arabia, and in those days, it must be remembered, very few people outside the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force had heard of him.

"The party was headed by a small man dressed in extremely good and expensive Beduin clothes, a richly-braided and decorated goat's hair cloak over all, and on his head a wonderful silk *kufaiyeh* (shawl) held in position by a gold *agal* (head cord). His feet were bare, and he had a gold Hegazi dagger in his belt, and in his hand he carried the usual almond-wood cane that every Beduin camel rider uses. As this regal-looking person came in through the tent door with the light behind his back, I imagined it must be the Emir Feisal himself out for a stroll in the cool morning air, or, at least, a very important messenger from him. I went, therefore, to meet the distinguished stranger and ceremoniously showed him to a chair, speaking the usual flowery Arabic words of welcome and greetings. He had barely sat down when to my surprise he said in perfect English: 'Well, Peake, so you have arrived at last. We have been waiting some time for you and your braves, and there is plenty of work for you up country.' I realized then that my distinguished stranger was no other than Lawrence himself; the man I was to serve under till the end of the war, and of whom I was to see so much during the years immediately following the Armistice."

After thus introducing himself Lawrence proceeded to outline to Peake a characteristically short, but illuminating, summary of his reasons for extending his campaign to Northern Arabia. His main object was to prevent the Turks from withdrawing from the line of the Hedjaz railway and sending to Palestine any of the odd 30,000 troops they had east of Jordan,



THE SOLDIERS' TOMB, SOMETIMES CALLED THE BARRACKS AT PETRA BECAUSE OF A STATUE OF A ROMAN SOLDIER  
OVER THE DOORWAY





A BEDUIN TRIBESMAN

then engaged on guarding the six hundred miles of railway, and maintaining a very strong force at Medina, the railhead. It was particularly important at the present time to prevent this, as the German thrust of March, 1918, had necessitated the withdrawal of a large number of Allenby's seasoned and best British troops for service in France, and the sudden arrival on the weakened Palestine front of some 30,000 veterans from Trans-Jordan and the Hedjaz would constitute a most serious embarrassment.

The Turks were obviously anxious to maintain their hold on Medina, because of its propaganda value in the Mahommedan world, though probably they exaggerated the value of this side of the question. Lawrence's idea was to make the maintenance of this garrison as costly in men and material as possible, and at the same time demonstrate that the withdrawal of this force through six hundred miles of desert held by the Arab forces would be too dangerous an undertaking to justify the attempt. His plan of campaign was to attack the railway at every vulnerable point and, wiping out the garrisons of the small stations, to blow up every bridge and culvert and in other parts to destroy long lengths of the permanent-way. He aimed also to cut off the Turks in Amman from Kerak and Tafileh, to interfere with the corn supplies they were drawing from this area, and generally to give the enemy the impression that the revolt in the desert had taken a most active and serious turn.

This was the general outline of Lawrence's coming campaign, but his immediate task—one for which Peake and his men were required—was a concerted movement with the Palestine army by which Allenby hoped to gain possession of Es Salt and Amman, on the eastern side of Jordan, with the purpose of sparing his men the ordeal of spending the summer in the depressing and unhealthy Jordan valley. To co-operate in this movement Lawrence had promised to attack Maan itself and thus hold in that town, and draw off from the railway line, all the reinforcements that would otherwise be sent north to stay Allenby's push.

The column that Peake had come to join with his Camel Corps was a mixed force commanded by Colonel Joyce, consisting of the British Armoured Cars under Dowsett, a section of 10-pounder guns under Brodie, and a special detachment of Beduin under Sheikh Haza. As Lawrence explained, there was need for a mobile infantry force—and Camel Corps, of course, fight on foot—because it had been found that, whenever the armoured cars attacked without infantry backing, a stalemate invariably ensued. The Turks went into the station buildings, or lay flat at the bottom of the trenches, and refused to stand up and surrender, though the cars might run around firing with their machine-guns. The crews in the armoured cars could not come out of them, as if they left the protection provided by the armoured plating they were shot up at once by the more numerous and better concealed enemy, and it was essential that a small disciplined force worked in close co-operation with the cars to cope with this situation. It had been proved by experience that the Beduin were too much of individualists to work in conjunction with any disciplined movement when correct timing was of all importance. The second rôle for which the Camel Corps was required was the making of constant raids on the railway and any important points between Deraa and Mudowara.

A few days after his arrival Peake's column was given orders to move northward up the Wadi Ithm to El Guera in preparation for the coming attack, but before leaving he was informed by the base commandant at Akaba that all officers going on expeditions where Beduin were likely to be present were to take with them money for the payment of the sheikhs and men. He was then taken to a small cement and stone building behind the main office, and handed a sealed canvas bag complete with leather holster in which to carry it. Then a document was produced—a receipt form—and he was asked to sign for £1,000 in gold, which he was informed were in the bag.

Peake protested that he did not want the gold, that he had no place in which to carry it, and that it would be of no use to him as he would not know how to spend it, but it was in vain. The order was that not less than £1,000 was to be carried by every British officer in command of a column, and if anything remained over when he got back to Akaba it was to be handed over to the base commandant. After this interesting and unusual financial transaction had been completed Peake had a look into the small room and saw, stacked up to the ceiling, dozens of sealed ammunition boxes, and, on the floor near the door, an array of canvas bags similar to the one he had just received. Each of the boxes, he learned, contained five canvas bags, and to quote Peake's own words: "Never before have I seen, nor do I expect to see again, the sinews of war so blatantly exposed."

Whilst on his way up the Wadi Ithm with his men he saw further signs of these "sinews of war," for two Model T. Fords, of the type known among the troops as "Tin Lizzies," passed him, each driven by a phlegmatic private of the R.A.S.C. and seated beside him one armed Arab. Despite the fact that the Arab knew not one word of English, and the Englishman only five or six words of Arabic, they were conversing cheerfully and intelligently on the various topics of the day, which is one of the remarkable features of the British soldier, who can fit himself comfortably into any society and any surroundings and make himself understood in any language.

The interesting part of this small cavalcade was that the two cars were loaded up and well down on the back axles with these sealed boxes such as Peake had seen in the store at Akaba, and each vehicle with its solitary escort was carrying upwards of £30,000 in gold. This struck him as being so unsafe that he mentioned it to the Emir Feisal when he met him some days later, but the Emir replied there was not the slightest necessity to be anxious about it as every Beduin knew the boxes contained gold, which was shortly to be distributed to them, therefore all were interested in its safe arrival and would see to it that it was not taken *en route* by a few evilly-disposed persons. As a matter of fact, this haphazard procedure was adhered to during the whole of Lawrence's campaign and not a piastre of those "sinews of war" was ever stolen on its way to the tribes who waited for them.

On arrival at El Guera, which was then the advanced base of the Arab army, Peake found the Emir Feisal there with his British and Arab advisers and the whole place a scene of great activity with a small party of Royal Flying Corps endeavouring to level off a landing ground. Here he was invited to meet the Commander-in-Chief of the Arab regular army, a

disciplined force as distinct from the Beduin irregulars and which had been raised in the early days of the revolt. It was then in command of the late Jafaar Pasha El Askari, more or less recently assassinated in Irak, with Nuri Pasha Said as second in command, and both these officers were later to be Prime Ministers of Irak. The rank and file of these regulars was composed almost entirely of Turkish prisoners of war captured on the Sinai and Libyan fronts, who being of Arab, Syrian or Palestinian birth had volunteered to serve in the Hedjaz in the struggle for Arab freedom. The numbers in this small army varied, but by 1918 it had been increased to roughly the size of an infantry brigade and on the whole they were an excellent body of men. As they constituted the only disciplined force in the Arab army, and could be relied upon to carry out an attack on modern lines, they had to bear the brunt of all the hard fighting, and obtained little credit for it when rewards—financial or otherwise—were being distributed.

Peake found Jafaar Pasha seated in his tent smoking a hubble-bubble and, after cigarettes and coffee had been passed round, he proceeded to explain to Peake the part he proposed to play in the coming attack against the Turkish lines of communication. He, with the Arab regulars, was to make the frontal assault on Maan, which was already invested by his forces, and he announced his intention of going round his advanced post at that moment, inviting Peake to come with him and see his dispositions for the assault. In the front-line trenches he met another senior Arab officer, Maulud Pasha, and this old warrior was not smoking a hubble-bubble, but a most British briar pipe.

Allenby's attempt to take Amman failed, his divisions being forced to withdraw with some loss to the Ghoraniyeh bridge-head over Jordan, and the news of this reverse came through to the Arab army before their attack on Maan in the mysterious rapid fashion by which news does travel among the Beduin in the desert. Lawrence heard rumours of this withdrawal long before the news was confirmed by wireless telegram from British H.Q. Despite the depressing effect of this information the attack on Maan was carried out with great vigour—old Maulud taking and wrecking the railway station at the head of his men and nearly capturing the town itself, being badly wounded in the thigh during the attempt.

After the failure to take Maan Lawrence went down to Tel es Sham to watch the attack on this station by the mixed disciplined force, which, on this occasion, was commanded by Dawnay during Joyce's absence in hospital, and, as he states in *Seven Pillars*, he was uneasy about a regular officer, who had at that time no knowledge of Arabic, fighting his first guerilla battle with that intricate weapon, the armoured car, involved in it. Peake's particular job was to rush the post with his men and the Beduins after the attack had been started by the armoured cars, and describing this battle Lawrence says: "Peake drew down on the station from the north, moving his men by repeated exposure of himself; hardly, for they were not fierce for honour."

The cars went on ahead according to plan and, with their machine-guns crackling, went right up to a trench in which there were about twelve Turks guarding the bridge which the small force were to blow up. The situation developed exactly as Lawrence had described to Peake a few days

previously, with the Turks hiding in the bottom of the trench until the cars should go away. At this moment the Egyptian Camel Corps appeared on the scene, moving at the double with alternate sections pushing forward under the cover of the remainder, and immediately the Turks realized there were infantry on the scene they hoisted the white flag and surrendered.

The bridge was then blown up, but the further demolition of the line could not be carried out as it was under fire from a small fort on the top of the hill. There were some twenty-five Turkish sharpshooters in this and they plastered the cars and Camel Corps with bullets every time a man exposed himself. The hill was too steep and rocky for the cars to reach the summit, and Peake decided to carry the strong point by the novel expedient of a camel charge. He asked Sheikh Haza if he would join in with his men, and next moment some two hundred and fifty camelry were rushing at the fort shooting wildly from the saddle, and yelling at the tops of their voices. The sight of this wild mob coming through a cloud of dust, with their saddle tassels swinging and their *burnous* (cloaks) billowing in the wind, must have paralysed the defending Turk with terror. It so upset their aim that only one man was killed in this rush across a perfectly open bit of country. Immediately the Beduin arrived at the foot of the hill they threw themselves off their camels, without checking the pace of the animals, and then charged up to the sangars on foot, where they disarmed the Turks before the Camel Corps, trying to do things according to the drill book, had time to dismount.

From this success the column moved on at once to Tel es Sham station, which was taken by the armoured cars and Camel Corps without difficulty. Here the Beduin took no part in the actual engagement, but charged in immediately the place fell in a wildly-gesticulating mob to sack the station stores. These two small actions around Tel es Sham were remarkable, firstly, for the enormous amount of damage done to the railway line and its culverts by Hornby's demolition parties—one over-charge of a hundred-weight of gun cotton actually lifting Lawrence's car into the air—and, secondly, for the immense enthusiasm with which the Beduin contingent raided the stores in the post, on which both Peake and Lawrence comment caustically. The struggle for loot was fiercer than the battle in this, to quote Lawrence: "the maddest looting of their history. Two hundred rifles, eighty thousand rounds of ammunition, many bombs, much food and clothing were in the station, and everybody smashed and profited. An unlucky camel increased the confusion by firing one of the many Turkish trip mines as it entered the yard. The explosion blew it arse over tip, and caused a panic. They thought Brodie was opening up with his guns again."

The drawback to this haul of loot was that eighty per cent of the Beduin were satisfied, which meant that the following morning Sheikh Haza's command had shrunk to a mere handful—the remainder having moved off during the night with no intention of fighting again until their store of food-stuffs was exhausted. Lawrence's personal loot consisted of the station bell, a handsome bit of Damascus work—Peake got only the ticket punch—and after this the station bell at every post was sought after eagerly and became the reward of the first man to fight his way inside the premises.

The following day Ramleh station, to the south, was taken, and Peake says it was amusing to see the deserter Beduin rushing in from the hills for

more loot, but on this occasion they were disappointed for by the time they arrived the armoured cars had mounted guard over the stores. After a day's rest the force moved north again to Wadi Retham, a station which was defended by a small fort on the top of a very steep hill. Brodie was ordered to shell it with his guns while Peake advanced on foot with his men, but this attack failed. The armoured cars then went in and captured the station, finding it full of stores.

According to plans the force was then to move on southwards and destroy the important station of Mudowara, which was held by a strong party of Turks, but Lawrence went on ahead of the column with two cars and, finding the place had been heavily reinforced, he called off the attack as being too risky. This decision was influenced by the very accurate shooting of four Austrian mountain guns, one of which put several shells in close proximity to Lawrence's car at a range of over seven thousand yards. As this was more than the British 10-pounders could cope with, Lawrence, realizing he could not afford heavy losses if they were accompanied by failure, was wise in cancelling the attack, for the information of a defeat accompanied by considerable casualties—and news travels fast in the desert—would have had a most serious effect on the Beduins farther north, who were sitting on the fence and watching events before they came in openly with Feisal.

The column, therefore, completed the destruction of the line between Mudowara and Maan so that repair was practically impossible, and then moved on to carry out further demolition at stations north of Maan. Meanwhile the attack on Maan was in full swing and was not going too well, for, though the Arab regulars had carried the station itself by storm, during which the briar-pipe-smoking Maulud was wounded at the head of his men, they had been unable to take the town itself, and a condition of stalemate had ensued.

Peake with his Camel Corps was passing along about a mile west of Jerdun station on his way north to Wadi Hasa when suddenly a car came bumping up over the desert towards him, and out of it stepped Lawrence.

"There's a mess up here, Peake," he said, "Jafar started his attack on Jerdun without blowing up the line north and south of it, as I instructed. He's in the station now and can't get any farther, and at any moment the Turks will send down reinforcements by train from Uneiza. They won't risk the engine, so that will be at the back of the train, and when they get just outside they'll unhitch the engine, take it back to Uneiza, and allow the train to run into Jerdun on top of Jafar's small party. I want you to get your men down to the line at once and blow it up before this happens."

Unfortunately, before Peake could move off things happened exactly as Lawrence had predicted. The train full of troops appeared in the north, the engine was uncoupled and went back, and the crowded trucks ran on down the incline to the station, where they drove off Jafar with the loss of several men. This, as Peake says, was only one of the many occasions when Lawrence saw things clearly from the enemy's point of view, and with this uncanny gift, which savoured almost of second sight or a sixth sense,

was able to foresee the course of a battle and the various contingencies he would have to guard against before the operation started.

Peake then moved on northwards to the place of assembly for the attack on Wadi Hasa and, by correct timing of their march, he with his Camel Corps met Sherif Nasr's Beduin at a spot about half a mile west of the station under cover of darkness. From the top of a small hill he could look down on the station where some lights showed through the windows, and a few camp fires were flickering in the yard by the railway. The whole scene was so peaceful that it was obvious the enemy was unaware of the coming attack, and Peake decided again to transgress Camel Corps regulations and deliver a mounted charge to which Sherif Nasr agreed with enthusiasm. The attack was planned to begin just before dawn and, so that there should be no delay in starting once the signal was given, the Camel Corps and Beduin were ordered to lie fully-armed beside their camels.

As the first streaks of dawn appeared in the east a Bedu rose up from the shadowy lines of *barraked* (squatting) camels, and in the high-pitched voice of calling to prayer, shouted: "*La Allah il Allah wa Mohammed Rasul Allah*" (There is no God but God and Mohammed is the Prophet of God), and, as the last word died away on its high quavering note, the whole party jumped on to their camels and charged up a wide open valley to the station, yelling and firing in the air. Although the Turks had two machine-guns posted and over fifty men in the trenches round the station, yet, so sudden and terrifying was the rush of madly galloping camels that only one man was wounded on the attacking side in the charge; and next moment Egyptians and Beduin were scrambling over the trenches, wrenching the rifles from the hands of the frightened Turks.

As Peake was seeing to the collection of arms and ammunition after the *mêlée* he heard a voice at his side saying: "Well, Peake, that was a very successful affair," and looked round to see Lawrence. He had come in by himself in the darkness while the party were waiting for the dawn, and, though far senior to Peake, he had made no attempt to take over command, but waiting for the signal had charged with the Arabs, to make his presence known only after the battle was over.

With the object-lesson of Jafaar's force and the Turkish train of reinforcements in his mind, Peake took instant steps to blow up the railway on both sides of the Wadi Hasa station, but the drawback to making a charge with troops not trained to carry out this spectacular movement is the difficulty experienced in rallying the force afterwards. All the Beduins and some of the Egyptians were searching for treasures in the station buildings, whilst the remainder of the Camel Corps were rounding up camels, which had strayed off when their riders had dismounted to attack on foot; or were fully occupied guarding prisoners. Eventually he got a small force together and sent off one party to the south to blow up the line, whilst he went to the north with another detachment.

On Peake's way he was joined by a Bedu on a horse who was going from Tafileh to Abu Lissal to see Feisal and, as time was of no particular object to him, he fell in with Peake's suggestion that he should join the demolition party. The lighting of the fuse, the heavy thudding explosion, and the resulting damage has an enormous appeal to the desert mind. This

chance meeting was an extremely lucky occurrence as but for it the probability is there would have been no necessity to write this book.

The party had just blown up two or three lengths of rails when there was an ominous rumbling sound to the north, and then the cause of this sound—a long train full of men—approached round a curve of the line. Peake at once realized that, owing to this bend in the line, his retreat was seriously threatened, and he was unable to go south as the Turks still held a small fort on a commanding hill between him and Wadi Hasa railway station. He gave orders to mount and retire to the hills about half a mile west of the line, but his own camel, frightened by the excitement, refused to *barrak* to allow Peake to mount him. During the struggle to get him down the head collar broke, and the next moment the animal was lumbering off after the rest of the troop in the particularly idiotic gait the camel adopts when he has succeeded in doing something particularly silly.

The Turks, seeing what had happened, began to dismount from the train and run across the desert to cut off Peake's retreat, and at this moment the invited guest came galloping back, calling on Peake to mount behind him. Unfortunately the horse was as excited as the camel had been and refused to stand still to enable Peake to clamber up. Meanwhile the Turks were closing in rapidly and the situation was becoming hopeless. "Take a hold of the horse's tail and," run shouted the Arab, and Peake, getting a firm grip and doing fifty yards running as fast as he could and the next fifty swinging in the air, behind the flying hoofs, made the half-mile to safety in a good bit less than record time. It was, as Peake said afterwards, one of those occasions when he was extremely glad he had with him a bag of gold, and a full-sized handful of coins constituted an adequate and instant reward for a very gallant action.

Owing to the destruction of the line before this episode occurred the Turks were unable to proceed farther southwards, and the day was spent carrying out further demolitions at Wadi Hasa and at Farafra, to the north, thus effectually cutting off Maan from Amman. In the evening Peake's force drew off for the night to Wadi Hasa water, where he found a large part of the Beduin bivouacked. The place selected for the camp was about as bad as it could be. It was a long narrow wadi with steep sides and practically no cover, and the Turks, no doubt knowing this, availed themselves of such a rare opportunity by sending six aeroplanes to bomb the camp and causing considerable loss.

That night Peake took the evening meal with the Arab commander, and they parted after making plans for further inroads on the Turks. To his surprise, however, on the following morning he found that the sheikh had departed with the whole of his command to some unknown spot during the night. Immediately after he had made this disconcerting discovery the six aeroplanes appeared again, but Peake's Egyptian Camel Corps, who had no tents, had made themselves snug in the reeds by the water. The pilots of the aeroplanes could detect nothing in the nature of a target and were then seen to move off towards the south, from which direction heavy bombing was heard shortly afterwards.

The cause of the sudden move of the Beduin then became quite clear. The commander, anticipating another visit from the aeroplanes, had hit



on the plan of moving to a wadi just behind the hills, quite forgetting that the occupants of aeroplanes can see over hills, and, confident in his own safety and expecting the Camel Corps would draw the bombing, had pitched all his conspicuous black tents with the accompanying camp fires to suffer a second time. Peake and the Beduin chief met later in the day, and far from being abashed the sheikh was cold and distant, and explained he would be unable to participate in any further raids on the railway, for apparently he thought a low trick had been played upon him by the Camel Corps by escaping the bombing which his own men had experienced.

After this interesting manœuvre the Egyptian Camel Corps started on their way back to Abu Lissal, where their advanced base had been established. Their troubles, however, were not over, for the supply of rations they had taken with them for the operation had become exhausted owing to the constant delays which are inseparable from Bedu warfare. Their excitement was great, therefore, when the long-expected convoy arrived in sight, but why the Beduin, who were acting as a guard, took the trouble to bring it will ever remain a mystery, for they had helped themselves to everything, including even the forbidden bacon and equally forbidden rum. Except for some sheep they stole—"shamelessly," as Peake puts it—from a Bedu by the wayside, they had no rations of any kind until they arrived back at their base at Abu Lissal.

Whilst waiting at Abu Lissal for supplies and equipment Peake obtained leave for a few days to visit Petra, the deserted but otherwise almost intact city of the Nabatceans, which lies in the mountains of Edom, west of Maan. Petra has been described so frequently by thrilled and awe-struck travellers that to attempt anything of that nature here would be both redundant and inadequate. It is sufficient to say that Petra is quite unique—a forgotten city hidden in the heart of a mountain gorge and created by a Semitic race, not by building with stone and mortar, but by the infinitely more laborious method of carving out their temples and public buildings from the living rock. The wonder of the scene is enhanced by the colour of the stone—mainly a warm shade of rose, shading here and there to darker crimson, with occasionally streaks of turquoise-blue.

The only entrance to Petra from the east is by way of the *Sik*, a very narrow gorge, or rather deep cut, in the mountain-side, which in parts is only a few yards wide, and the sky, intensely blue, can just be seen overhead between the sheer walls of water-cut rock, in the cracks of which desert scrub and the biblical hyssop sprout and hang down. At the far end of this—nearly a mile away from the entrance—the *Sik* ends quite suddenly, and immediately in front of the astonished sightseer there is the vast Khazna or Treasury, with its ornate façade of carved pillars round the huge entrance.

Peake was accompanied on his first visit to Petra by Scott, an Irishman, who was acting as base commandant at Akaba, and when they arrived at Elji, the little village about 2½ miles east of the dead city, they found the inhabitants most unwilling to show them the way inside. They are most peculiar and secretive people, these semi-Arabs who live in Wadi Musa and inside Petra itself, and though they have no knowledge of their descent, pretending they are of pure Arab birth, it is just possible they are descended from the ancient Nabatceans who made the city

before the coming of the Romans ; but it is more probable they are the remains of three large Jewish settlements that were living in the vicinity in the days of the Prophet. It cannot be said that they respect the sanctity of the various temples, as they use most of them as cattle kraals, and the solid six-foot deposit of age-old manure on the floors of these excites horticulturally-minded tourists to such an extent that they are unable to pay proper attention to the antiquities. Nevertheless the inhabitants seem to be in awe of the place and to dislike outsiders entering it, the dislike being tempered by the backsheesh they obtain for acting as guides.

Immediately Peake and Scott entered Petra proper the inhabitants swarmed out of the caves and temples demanding food, and as there was no prospect of seeing the sights in peace until they were satisfied Peake bought a small bullock which was slaughtered on the spot. Immediately the skin was torn off it the inhabitants fell on the carcass with their knives, hacking off slices of meat and, after poking these into the fire for a minute or so, gulped them down. Peake discovered their starving condition was due to the fact that Turkish patrols from Maan had several times visited Petra, carrying off all the inhabitants' corn and food and most of their livestock. On his return to Abu Lissal he reported the state of affairs to the Emir Feisal, who at once despatched several sacks of flour to the valley. Peake has always remembered this visit to Petra, not only because it was the first of so many he made afterwards, but more particularly because of the wonderful peace and quietness of the long-deserted city in a world torn with war and the noise of battle. The extraordinary silence that reigns in the streets of this once densely-populated town is a feature of similar places of antiquity in the deserts. It is a silence that is almost unearthly, and lends a spirit of awe and reverence together with a feeling of peace.

Scott, the Irishman, was in the best of spirits and was entranced by the vast amphitheatre which stands on the same side of the "street" as the Khazna. The atmosphere of silence did not appeal to him, and he insisted on Peake taking a front seat in the auditorium whilst he took the "stage," where he sang *The Wearin' of the Green*, his big baritone voice echoing round the cliffs and mountains. Peake was probably the first audience and Scott the first performer in that theatre since the city had been abandoned some fifteen hundred years ago.

On their return to Abu Lissal Lawrence came to see Peake to ask his advice as a professional soldier on some more effective way of destroying a railway line than that laid down in the Manual of Military Engineering, which consisted of placing a slab of gun-cotton against a rail and blowing an eight-inch gap in it. This had been found quite ineffective, as the Turks merely joined the broken ends together, or at a pinch would drive a train over the gap. Peake explained that though he was a professional soldier, he was only an infantryman, and that all matters connected with demolition were the preserve of the Royal Engineers—a very jealous corps who objected to ordinary soldiers experimenting with their work, and therefore his own knowledge in the matter was only that of an amateur. However, they went with a small party up to the railway line and after a series of practical experiments eventually arrived at a method which they decided should be christened "The Tulip," on account of the general appearance of the line

after the explosion, and as such it is referred to constantly in *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*. The Hedjaz railway, in common with most other desert railways, was laid with iron sleepers, and the Peake-Lawrence system consisted of putting a slab of gun-cotton, not against a rail, but under the centre of a sleeper. If the gun-cotton was not actually touching the sleeper the explosion bent it to an acute angle and the rails on either side of it were pulled in and twisted, while the whole of the ballast of the line in that part was scattered. As this form of demolition necessitated new railway metal of which the Turks were extremely short, it proved to be the ideal system and was used exclusively after these experiments. Peake's Egyptians became so expert and rapid at laying these mines that a demolition party could go down a railway line at little less than ordinary walking pace, with a series of explosions marking their progress, and those delightful harbingers of spring—the tulips—springing up in their tracks behind them.

## CHAPTER IV

## NORTHWARDS TO DERA A

"The age of gold shall brighten as of yore,  
And all exulting say : 'Long live the Moor.'"

(*Bellincioni.*)

AT THE BEGINNING OF SEPTEMBER, 1918, ALL WAS BUSTLE AND MOVEMENT of men, cars and camels in the Arab camps at Abu Lissal and el Guera in preparation for the great push northwards to cut the railway north and south of Deraa with a considerable force. This move was designed to take place two days before Allenby made his lightning stroke against the Turks on the coastal belt, which led to the crushing victory of Megiddo and to the end of the war with Turkey. It was to be no ordinary raid, but a general movement of the whole Arab force to participate in what was intended to be the last battle of the Eastern campaign. The blowing up of the railway north and south of Deraa would have the effect of causing the Turks to believe that the main stroke was coming east of Jordan, and not to the west ; and incidentally it would cut off all direct communications between the Turkish front line and both Amman and Damascus.

In many books that have been written of the Arab campaign the fact that the Turks had massed well over half their forces east of Jordan is attributed entirely to the threat from Feisal's and Lawrence's advance. Each book seems to have taken up the story where the previous one left off, and the numbers of Turks east of Jordan increased together with the credit given to the Arabs. In fact, articles have appeared in American magazines which maintain that Lawrence and his Arabs won the battle of Megiddo and that Allenby hardly figured in it at all.

It is true that the larger portion of the Turks were east of Jordan when the battle started, but this was due only partly to the northward advance

of the Arab army. The whole of this carefully prepared battle had been designed by Allenby and his staff to deceive the Turks into thinking the main attack was coming on the east of Jordan, whereas it was intended to make it on the coast; and no little detail was overlooked which would contribute to this deception. G.H.Q. staff moved in from its quarters at Ramleh, near the coast, to hotels in Jerusalem, and did it very ostentatiously—a move commented on adversely by journalists who are always incensed if the Staff look like making themselves comfortable in first-class hotels; the whole cavalry corps was massed in the encampments round Ghoraniyeh bridge-head, while new and conspicuous camps were made there and filled with Egyptian Labour Corps who wore British uniforms; additional bridges and roads were constructed on the River Jordan; battalions marched by day down the Jerusalem-Jericho road, and went back by lorry at night to perform the march again the following day. Meanwhile, also by night, the cavalry moved off again to the west to its new encampments under the orange trees between Jaffa and Ludd, where no tents were pitched, and in their old camps in Jordan valley, where the tents were still erected, imitation horses of canvas and blanket stood in the lines, and industrious Egyptian Labour Corps tended them.

In recounting all this there is no desire to belittle the very great assistance the Arabs rendered east of Jordan, but, as so many books have entirely ignored the very clever staff work carried out by Allenby and his men in preparation for this brilliant battle, it is necessary to point out that the fatal massing of the Turkish defence on the Amman-Es Salt line was in some measure due to Lord Allenby himself and the men under his command. In other words, the Turks massed there to resist the thrust of the cavalry corps, and not to withstand the coming advance of Feisal's Arabs.

A part of the Arab army detached to move northwards for this attack on the important junction of Dera'a consisted of the Egyptian Camel Corps, a detachment of Gurkhas, and some three hundred of the Arab regular army supported by the armoured cars and aeroplanes. It was not, however, destined that this force should march together. The Arab regular army announced suddenly that it would not undertake any further operations unless the arrears of pay due to it were settled, and, as the usual monthly subsidy had not then arrived, it became an urgent matter to obtain it. This demand, Peake explains, though it may sound outrageous, could be excused, as these unfortunate men had borne the brunt of all the serious fighting, their claims to recognition being considered fully when an attack was contemplated, but in all matters concerning pay and rations they had been regarded as of far less importance than the irregular Beduin tribesmen, who had received the first consideration though their value in the field of battle was not so conspicuous. By the time that the Beduins' claims had been met there was seldom anything left for the unfortunate regulars.

The situation became critical as it was uncertain if the monthly subsidy would arrive in time for the regular army to take part in the operations. The result of this was that the Camel Corps, Gurkhas, and armoured cars were sent off to the wells at Jafar, whilst Colonel Joyce and various other officers were to follow with the Arab regulars later. At Jafar was Audah

Abu Tayi, the famous paramount sheikh of the Howietat Arabs, a man of great local eminence. To him Peake on his arrival paid his respects, with a request that the rations which were waiting there for him be handed over and permission given for the watering of his camels. To his amazement both requests were indignantly refused. Something at a loss, he endeavoured to placate the irate chieftain, but the man was adamant, asserting that he had been grossly insulted by a British officer the day previously and that Peake and his party would only water at his well over his dead body. As Audah Abu Tayi was the most important man of the big Howietat tribe, and as the adherence and enthusiasm of this tribe was vital to the Arab cause, Peake suggested they should go to his tent and discuss the matter quietly. It then transpired that on the previous day a British officer had passed with two cars, and that Abu Tayi had asked for a lift in one of them for himself and several of his attendants, to go and see the Emir Feisal at Abu Lissal. This request had been refused, and Abu Tayi considered his "face had been blackened" in view of the whole tribe. It was quite easy to envisage and understand this scene—the British officer, ignorant of the Beduin and their ways and concerned only with his cars and their springs and back axles, and the very autocratic and aristocratic sheikh, regarding himself and his personal affairs as of far more importance than the whole campaign and extremely touchy about his dignity in the face of his assembled tribe.

No amount of talk or persuasion could overcome the determination of Abu Tayi to obstruct the advance of the Camel Corps, and Peake was forced to fix up his heliograph and send a message through to H.Q. at Abu Lissal. Shortly afterwards an aeroplane arrived carrying Lawrence himself with a letter from Feisal and a supply of gold. After this everything went smoothly—the men of the Camel Corps received their rations, and the camels went down to water. It is believed the sum necessary to placate Abu Tayi was £10,000 and, if this was the case, the water for each camel worked out at about £66 per head.

To the average Occidental the word water conveys nothing, or very little. He knows water only as something that runs freely out of a tap, that drips off the roof of his house and gurgles in his gutters on rainy days, and that sometimes floods his garden and the road to his house. In any case there is plenty of it wherever he may go, and it never occurs to him probably that in some parts of the world it is a commodity of the greatest value, and that the possession of a first-class well in Arabia puts a family into a rather higher category than does the ownership of a first-class grouse moor in Scotland. For an Arab to see strangers and foreigners helping themselves liberally to the precious water in that well is on a par with a Scottish moor owner regarding a party of poachers shooting his grouse before the 12th August, and possibly this is only a lukewarm simile. The fact remains that in Arabia the right to water at wells is most jealously guarded, for on a series of reliable water holes depends a tribe's position and authority, and permission to draw on these supplies is given only in return for some concession—or, of course, to solitary travellers in need in accordance with Beduin hospitality—but it is not given freely to armed forces of a foreign power even if that foreign power happens to be fighting on the same side

in a struggle for independence. Water to the Beduin is of greater importance than causes, and this in some measure may explain the sheikh's peculiar attitude. Another explanation is that he belonged to the Howietat tribe and the Howietat were always *difficile*, causing both Feisal and Lawrence some anxiety, as at the beginning of the rising they were regarded as doubtful. They disliked the Turk, but their age-old dislike of some of the Hedjaz tribes was far greater.

After spending one day at Jafar the force marched on to Bair, where a convoy was waiting to be escorted to Azrak, a richly watered oasis at the head of the great Wadi Sirhan, which was then the advanced headquarters of the Arab army. Both Jafar and Bair were important wells in the desert east of the Hedjaz railway, and strategically the Trans-Jordan desert was an ideal country for the type of warfare Lawrence was conducting. The Turks were tied down to their long vulnerable railway line with the desert always on one side and in parts on both, but this desert, so far from being a protection, was always a danger. Although it looks flat and featureless it contains a series of folds in the ground and depressions, in which considerable forces could work up unseen to within decisive range, and at various places within striking distance there were water supplies, Jafar, Bair, Azrak and others, which the Turk could not possibly guard or deny, and which served as admirable jumping off spots for raids and demolition parties.

There were more delays at Bair, for the detachment of Gurkhas, which had been posted to Peake's column to protect his men while they blew up the line, asked to be returned to their own unit in Palestine on the ground that they were not used to riding camels, which, as Peake said, was an unnecessary explanation, for the fact was quite obvious. These hardy mountaineers had the aversion to the camel common to all races not brought up to these animals, and had it to a more marked degree than usual, so that to them the day's march on camel-back was purgatory. The stocky little soldiers had not been treated very fairly or considerably, as they had been transferred hurriedly from their battalion on the Palestine front and the day after their arrival at Akaba had been sent up-country on camels without the slightest attempt to give them any training, or to get them hardened to the saddle. Moreover, their own British officers were not with them and they were under the command of a captain who could not speak Hindustani. As the Gurkha officers explained to Peake, it was impossible to get their complaints attended to, as their own officer did not understand them, and they appealed therefore to him. Their men, they said, were not getting their proper rations and, being completely exhausted at the end of the day's march, were unable to take the camels out grazing or even to collect firewood for their cooking. Moreover, their *amour propre* had been hurt. The Gurkhas, they explained, have a very high tradition of serving, not only with British troops, but with *crack* British troops, and their standard of discipline and efficiency is exceptional. They could not reconcile themselves to the lax methods of the Arab army, and, knowing that their unit in Palestine was taking its rightful place in an organized brigade and division and indulging in heavy fighting, they wished to return to that country where soldiering *was* soldiering.

It was then that Peake's knowledge of Hindustani proved of the greatest

value, for he was able to put the minds of the Gurkhas at rest over the question of missing the fighting, promising them all they would want when they had moved north a bit. Their immediate troubles he overcame by issuing them with some of his own men's rations, and he made arrangements by which the Egyptians assisted them with the grazing of their camels and the fetching of firewood. The Egyptian soldiers are naturally most kindly hearted and helpful men, and, once they had been properly introduced to the Gurkhas, a warm friendship sprang up between the two races despite the fact that neither spoke a word of the language of the other. After this there was not the slightest trouble with the Gurkhas, and they served with Peake in his mixed column until the campaign ended at Damascus.

No sooner had the Gurkha troubles been settled than the Beduin convoy attached to Peake's column "downed tools," and refused to march further for some obscure reason known only to the nomad mind. This necessitated further speeches of a conciliatory nature, this time in Arabic, and immediately this matter had been settled things blew up on the French front. Accompanying the Arab force was a battery of French mountain guns carried on mules and commanded by an extremely keen and capable officer, who on his arrival at Bair had gone to the Arab commissariat for his forage only to discover that the millet ration which had been sent on ahead for his mules was missing. The trouble was that Peake's Camel Corps had taken the supply for their own animals, being under the impression, so they said, that it was intended for them. Peake had no knowledge of this, and his first intimation that something was wrong came when the infuriated commandant galloped into his camp, and began to address him in the fastest-spoken French he had ever heard. The Gurkhas and Egyptians, hearing the noise, gathered round to see the fun, and this so exasperated the angry officer that he pulled his hat from his head, threw it on the ground, and "marked time," or rather, danced on it. This, of course, convinced the assembled company that it *was* a joke and a good one, and to show their appreciation they roared with laughter, whereupon the infuriated and grossly-insulted officer mounted his horse and galloped off in a cloud of dust.

Peake allowed about an hour for Gallic cholera to subside, and then loading up some bags of millet on to camels he rode over to the French camp with the most profuse apologies for his men's stupidity. In a moment the *entente cordiale* was re-established, and with arms round each other's necks they went down to see the mules eat their delayed meal.

The following day the whole of this very cosmopolitan force marched off across the desert to Azrak, where for a change everything was in order, and all units found their rations and forage waiting for them. Azrak, a well-watered and cultivated spot at the head of the Wadi Sirhan, had been selected as the advanced base of the Arab army for its operations around Amman and Deraa. Peake's impression of Azrak was that it was not quite so charming as it appeared to be at first sight, for he selected as his camping ground the shore of one of the largest pools, but immediately he and his men had undressed and entered the water they were attacked by swarms of large grey flies. These settled immediately on any portion of their bodies that appeared above water, biting savagely, and in a few minutes the whole of Peake's command was streaming with blood. After this experience

bathing become unpopular for the rest of their stay at Azrak, and they discovered also that the presence of the welcome water brought with it the inevitable mosquitoes, which sallied forth literally in millions immediately after dusk. After a day's rest in camp Peake was despatched by Lawrence with a force of sixty Camel Corps, thirty-two Gurkhas and two armoured cars, with instructions to blow up the railway between Mafrak and Dera'a. In referring to this operation in *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*, Lawrence writes :

"Affairs with Nuri and Feisal held me the whole day in Azrak, but Joyce had left me a tender by which on the following morning I overtook the army, and found them breakfasting among the grass-filled roughness of the Gian el Khunna—Joyce had bad news. Peake had rejoined, reporting failure to reach the line, because of trouble with Arab encampments in the neighbourhood of his proposed demolition. We had set store on breaking the Amman railway, and the check was an offence."

As this brief comment in *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* gives no details as to how the failure occurred it is interesting to give Peake's personal account of the reasons why the line was not blown up as ordered. There were a variety of mishaps and misunderstandings which occurred owing to faulty staff work for which Lawrence was not responsible, and the main factor that contributed to the failure was that Mafrak was not the real name of the place. It was known to all the Arabs as Ifdein, and Mafrak was a name given to it by the Turks after the campaign had started.

Ifdein, or Mafrak, lay some fifty-five miles north of Azrak and was at least thirty-six hours marching, but the camel convoy detailed to accompany Peake's column did not arrive at the time appointed and was twelve hours late. Then there were no maps available for the column to march by, and in the end some twelve guides were scraped together from odd men of the Roalla tribe who had just arrived in Azrak under Nuri Ibn Shaalan.

Eventually the delayed column moved off at about 6 p.m. with the intention of marching all night, but after proceeding some distance the guides halted and showed a disinclination to go farther. After a discussion which lasted some four hours Peake eventually got them on the move again, and by constant urging he kept them going until 4 p.m. the following evening, when the guides stopped suddenly and said from the hill in front Mafrak station could be seen.

Peake went up to the top of the rise and found this information correct, for in the open plain below he could see the railway reaching across the desert, its line of telegraph poles waving in the mirage, and in the foreground the grouped buildings of the station with the usual small water tower. So far, so good ; but around the station, and stretching for a considerable distance on either side of it, were some five hundred black Beduin tents ; and these in close proximity to a Turkish post were not only unusual but highly suspicious and significant.

Then about forty Beduin horsemen galloped out from the tents and rode up to Peake's halted column. They told him they knew who he was ; that they had had news that he was coming, and that the Turks in the station knew also and were prepared, having sent for reinforcements from Amman.



They themselves were of the Beni Sakhr tribe, and were friends of the Emir Feisal, but on the other hand they had come to an agreement with the Turks to guard the railway line in return for being allowed to water their animals at the station. This being the case they did not intend to allow Peake or anyone else to interfere with the railway and, incidentally, with their free water supply. Once again that precious liquid was proving a stumbling block to military operations.

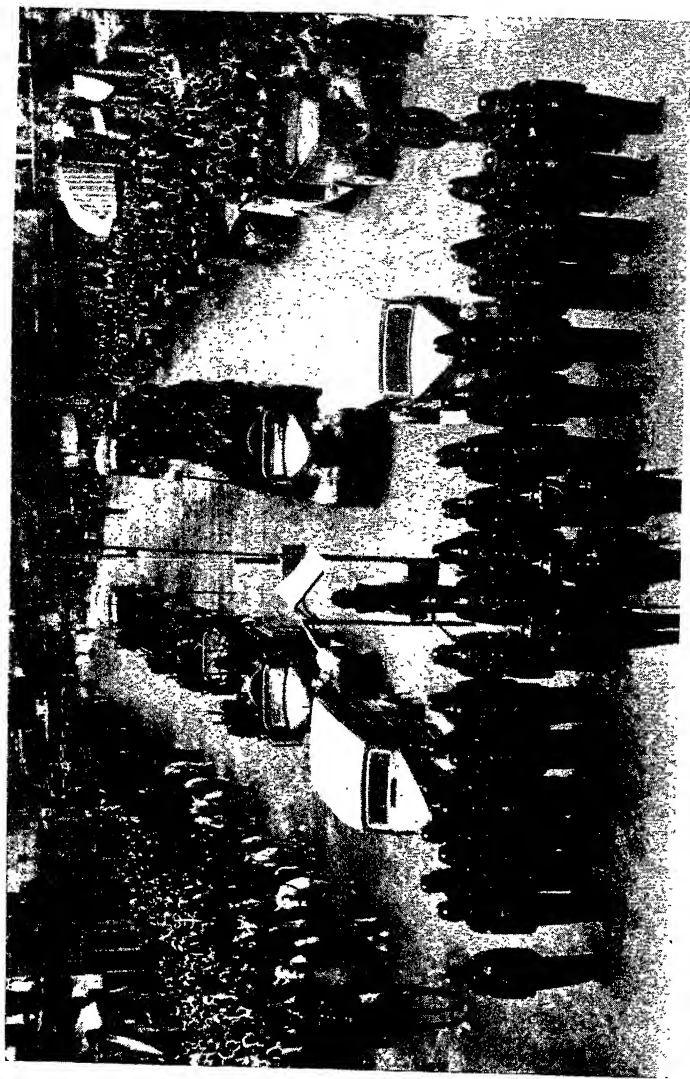
Whilst this discussion was taking place an armoured train came in sight and drew up at the station, and Peake found himself faced, not with a stretch of unprotected line as he had been led to expect, but a fully prepared Turkish garrison, which had been recently reinforced, and with an armoured train standing by to deal with any eventuality. In addition to all this was the embarrassing political situation created by the presence of the Beni Sakhr, who were prepared to fight for the line—and the water; and this was the most difficult feature of the impasse.

At this stage of operations the Arab tribes around Deraa and towards Damascus had not come out openly on the Arab side, though both Lawrence and Feisal had been negotiating with them, and they had promised to co-operate immediately the Arab army made its victorious advance. It was known that certain sections of these tribes were in the pay of the Turks, and their attitude was still uncertain, for they were seated on the fence waiting to see which way the cat was going to jump, a very natural position considering they had had ocular demonstration of the fate of those who took up arms too soon. To have a hostile encounter with these wavering tribesmen might have the most disastrous consequences, for among the Beduin the loss of a life, even through accident or misunderstanding, constitutes a blood feud that can only be wiped out in blood. Although Peake was quite prepared to fight, to the last man if necessary, he was not prepared to take a step that might prejudice the future of the whole Arab campaign. He retired from the railway some seven miles to be safe from attack during the night, and at dawn the following day he found that the guides had deserted under the cover of darkness. The next morning he met the main column moving north towards Deraa, and, having reported the situation on the railway line to the east, he joined the advancing army. It transpired later that for some reason known only to themselves the Roalla guides had led Peake not to Mafrak, but to Zerka, a station some twenty-five miles to the south of it, and as Peake had not been provided with a map and had never seen either of these places before he had no means of knowing that he had been misled. After all, one desert station on the Hedjaz railway looks very much like another.

Several years later when Peake, as officer commanding the Arab Legion, visited Zerka he asked the Shishan, a Caucasian people transplanted by the Turks to this village, if they remembered the incident. They said they recalled every detail of it, for all the Shishan from Zerka and from Sukhna, two miles away, had been called in by the Turks for the defence of the railway. Therefore, if Peake had attacked with his small party of one hundred men he would not only have prejudiced the attitude of a large and important tribe, but would have found himself engaged with a force of well over one thousand backed by an armoured train.



HIS HIGHNESS THE EMIR ABDULLA OF TRANS-JORDAN



THE ARAB LEGION ON STATE PARADE IN AMMAN

Town police in front, cavalry on left, armed cars in centre, and troop carriers on right.

## CHAPTER V

## THE TURKISH ROUT

"He who leaves the fame of good or great works after him does not die."

(Arab proverb.)

THE NIGHT AFTER THE FAILURE AT MAFRAK PEAKE'S SMALL COLUMN MOVED on to Umm Taiye, just south of Bosra on the branch line from Deraa, and he was ordered to carry out an attack on the railway here. This time he succeeded in doing a considerable amount of damage, but had extreme bad luck in missing by a matter of minutes a train filled with troops going north. He had just discovered a three-arch bridge, literally asking to be blown up, but while he was waiting for the camel with the gun-cotton to arrive, the train with its convoy of troops passed over it—the last to travel that way for many a long year.

Immediately after the explosion which heralded the collapse of the bridge, Lawrence arrived in a Ford car. It was then about 12 p.m. on a very dark night, and it was always a mystery how this very active, tireless man found his way across a rough, boulder-strewn country which was most difficult to negotiate even in daylight. He stayed for some time admiring the effects of the "Tulips" and the rapidity with which they grew, for by this time the Egyptians had evolved a drill for "Tulip" planting by which fifty were laid almost at the double, and the fuse-firing officer, moving at something more than the double, ran down the line with a veritable volley of explosions chasing him.

The following morning, when Peake had returned to camp at Umm Taiye, Lawrence came to see him again, this time with the good news that the pay of the Arab regulars had been handed over to them at last, and that the contingent had arrived that day in great spirits and full of fight. Lawrence was highly delighted, for he had now the force he wanted for a concentrated attack on the next day, the 17th, on all the railways running from the Deraa junction: the very important main branch running to Damascus, the still more important link with Palestine, and the line to Amman in the south. This was to be Lawrence's contribution to Allenby's main stroke in the extreme west timed to start just before dawn two days later, the 19th April, and, if all went well, the Turks would be unable to send any reinforcements to help stem the main attack when it came, and they would, on the other hand, despatch any available reserves to deal with Lawrence's Arabs and Chetwode's XXth Corps, which was striking on the same day as Lawrence in the Judean hills, Chetwode's task being to get astride the Nablus road and cut off the retreat of the enemy when the main attack was delivered.

On the fateful 17th Peake moved out to cut the Damascus line north of Deraa, whilst the Arab regulars under Nuri Said were responsible for the Palestine branch going west. The indefatigable Lawrence was flying about in a car from one section of his forces to another over a very extended area of country. In this respect his position, as what one might call acting

commander-in-chief, was totally different from that of a regular army general fighting a battle with disciplined and organized troops and a trained staff. The regular general has completed all his work before zero hour, and once the first salvo of artillery crashes out he knows that every unit will act in accordance with its orders. Lawrence, with his queer, cosmopolitan crowd of individualists, had no such guarantee. In fact, he had every reason to fear that most of the attacks would be late, and that it was more than a possibility some might not materialize at all ! To ensure that the movement developed as he had promised Allenby he had to see to things personally, and for the next two days he was rushing from one point to another on his very extended front, using his strange forceful personality to keep things moving to time ; and all those who lived and worked with Beduin will realize that only a superman could do this.

Peake, as a regular officer, knew exactly what he had to do, the time available, and above all he knew his men. They would work uncomplainingly and furiously in the heat for twelve or more hours at a stretch, but they must have breakfast first, for the Egyptian cannot work and fight on an empty stomach and a dry throat. When Peake's column arrived at the section of line he was to destroy he found that for some distance it ran through fields of maize, which provided conveniently the most excellent cover from, not only ground troops, but also from aeroplanes that were becoming increasingly active. He ordered the column to halt for breakfast before the work started. The men hobbled their camels and started to prepare their food, and at the same time Peake's orderly produced his camp chair and table from a baggage camel, laid the cloth properly, and produced bacon and eggs, coffee and marmalade. To those who are unacquainted with either the Egyptian Army or the Sudan, all this may sound a little unnecessary on active service, but it must be borne in mind that this standard of living for the officer is usually not the conception of the officer himself, but that of the Sudanese orderly. This, the orderly has understood from his infancy, is the standard of the Englishman and, having risen to eminence as the personal orderly of an English officer, he makes it his religion to see that his master never departs from that standard whatever the conditions may be. The officer may give definite orders to the contrary and say that he will eat from the ground, but this is unthinkable and not to be allowed, for not only would the *sharaf* (honour) of the officer be laid in the dust, but, what is of more moment, that of the orderly himself would be laid even deeper. If the unit suddenly found itself in Hell, meals would be produced and the table laid as usual even if the tablecloth was scorched.

As Peake says : "I had hardly sat down to my bacon and eggs when Lawrence supercharged with zeal dashed up in his car, and was heard to be asking for the officer in charge. A moment later he was led through the high stalks of maize to where I sat, and, when he saw the table with the white cloth, a certain amount of shiny plate on it and a box of Corona Corona cigars, and all around the Egyptians and Gurkhas eating peacefully, his surprise was such that I shall never forget it."

Peake explained he knew exactly what had to be done, and how he was going to do it. That the men had a long hard day before them and would do the work the better on full stomachs than on empty ; and that

in five minutes, when breakfast was finished, he would start. After silently looking at the scene for some moments Lawrence went slowly back to his car, but the episode impressed itself on his memory, for years later he wrote in *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* :

"I wanted the whole line destroyed in a moment : but things seemed to have stopped. The Army had done its share : Nuri Said was posting machine-guns about the Arar mound to keep back any sortie from Deraa : but why was there no demolition going on ? I rushed down to find Peake's Egyptians making breakfast. It was like Drake's game of bowls, and I fell dumb with admiration."

Immediately after breakfast Peake and his Egyptians started work and during that interminably long and hot day they destroyed over eight kilometres of railway line, leaving it in such hopeless ruin that it was not re-established again until the evening of the 24th September, and by this time it was too late as the British and Arab advance had swept on and Damascus fell on the 1st October. In describing Peake's activities on this day, Lawrence writes :

"Things looked and sounded hot, but the Egyptians went on working as methodically as they had eaten. Four parties dug in Tulips whilst Peake and one of his officers lit each series as it was laid. The two slabs of gun-cotton in a tulip charge were not enough to make a showy explosion, and the aeroplanes seemed not to see what was going on : at least they did not wash them particularly with bombs ; and as the demolition proceeded the party drew gradually out of the danger-area into the quiet landscape to the north. We traced their progress by the degradation of the telegraph. In virgin parts its poles stood trimly, drilled by the taut wire : but behind Peake they leaned and tottered anyhow, or fell."

At the conclusion of this day's work the supply of gun-cotton had run so low that the following morning, whilst the Arab regulars continued the demolition, Peake set off to Azrak to obtain a fresh supply. As he was afraid something important might happen during his absence, he decided to make a forced march of it. He selected three or four of the best fast-trotting camels from the corps, and with some chosen Beduin lent him by Lawrence, set off from the north of Deraa about 7 p.m. on the 18th. He and his party jogged on all through the night at the quick shambling pace of the *hageen* and, as they were making coffee at dawn the following morning, they felt the air tremble and heard the muffled rumble of guns. These thudding reverberations proved that the preliminary bombardment had begun on the Turkish lines, nearly one hundred and twenty miles away to the west, and heralded the beginning of the great advance, which was to go on without intermission until the walls of Aleppo and the Taurus mountains were reached, and the complete destruction of an army had been achieved.

The party arrived in Azrak some four hours later and were loaded up with explosives and supplies, when an Arab messenger arrived and asked Peake to go and see the Emir Feisal, who was in his camp nearby and who, the orderly said, had some *khubbar zain* (good news) for him. Peake

went across at once to hear from the Emir the first reports of the long series of brilliant successes that were to come through during the coming week. Although the battle had only been in progress a matter of four hours Allenby had been able to send through to his Arab ally news of complete success all along the line, the Turkish front utterly broken, and the cavalry streaming through the gaps in pursuit of the demoralized army.

After lunch with the Emir, Peake had two hours' sleep and set forth again for the north with his laden camels. The rate of marching was not so rapid on the return owing to the weight the animals were carrying, but again marching all night he arrived back at Umm Taiye at noon on the 20th September, having covered one hundred and forty miles in forty-one hours. Such feats of hard riding and endurance performed by British officers on camels won the admiration of the Beduin, who regard themselves as the only race who can make long-distance journeys and resist fatigue, and this ability of Englishmen to rival and even out-march them did more to win their allegiance to the cause than any other factor. It was Lawrence's famous race across Sinai to meet Allenby after the battle of Akaba—one hundred and seventy miles in forty-nine hours, much the same timing as Peake's forced march to Azrak—that established him so firmly in the respect and affection of the Beduin tribes with Feisal's force.

News of the defeat of their comrades in Palestine had reached the Turkish garrisons of Amman and Deraa, and during the next five days there were signs of great activity and uneasiness. Parties of engineers came out under strong guards to endeavour to repair the broken lines and open up communications again, but Peake's column and the Arab regulars destroyed by night the work carried out by day, and added to the demoralization by blowing up further culverts and bridges.

On the night of the 26th, Peake was seated over his camp-fire before setting out on his night's demolition when he heard the soft shuffling padding noise made by a camel's feet when he is moving rapidly. Then into the flickering light of the fire came a stately white camel and on its back a figure in flowing white robes.

For a moment Peake's thoughts went back to olden wars at the dawn of Islam and, it seemed to him, that in just such a way, on a similar white camel and with similar white clothing, had come the messenger to Omar, waiting at Medina, to announce the great Arab victory over the Romans at Yarmuk in A.D. 636. "We travelled in the print of olden wars," for Yarmuk where the Arabs first met the legions of Rome lay hardly ten miles away to the north-west.

The rider was Lawrence in an exalted mood who had come to tell Peake of the complete success of the British Army in Palestine. The Turks, he said, were broken and retreating everywhere, and it was essential this retreat should become a non-stop rout. Deraa was already being evacuated, and the troops from the town, and from Irbid farther west, were retiring up the road through Mezereeb and by the railway towards Damascus. He wanted Peake to march at once and get astride this road. Demolitions were no longer important as trains were not running, and therefore the season of "Tulips" was over.

Peake marched at once and with his very small force, together with a

detachment of the Arab army, got astride the road, and during the whole of the next day his men were bringing in such enormous numbers of prisoners who had surrendered at the first sign of resistance, that it was difficult to detect the escorts in their midst. That night the news arrived that the advancing British cavalry were likely to enter Deraa the following day, and Peake received orders to meet them in the town.

On his way there Peake heard the sound of firing in the small village of Tafas, and on going to investigate he found a party of infuriated Arabs shooting down the Turkish prisoners they had captured in it. When Peake protested, an excited Arab, foaming at the mouth, rushed up, seized him by the arm, and dragged him into a house, where he was shown the most appalling sights of frightfulness perpetrated on women and children of the village by the retreating Turks. This was the scene so vividly described by Lawrence.

"We rode past the other bodies of men and women and four more dead babies, looking very soiled in the daylight. By the outskirts were low mud walls, sheepfolds, and on one something red and white. I looked close and saw the body of a woman folded across it, nailed there by a saw bayonet whose haft stuck hideously into the air, from between her naked legs. She had been pregnant, and about her lay others, perhaps twenty in all, variously killed, but set out in accord with obscene taste."

When Peake arrived it was too late to do anything as the last Turk was dead. Every enemy found in that village had been shot, not with one bullet but with many, and, as Peake says, although it is doubtful whether the wretches who were killed were really the perpetrators of the horrors, yet the Arabs' fury was excusable.

Peake, with Lawrence and the Arabs, arrived in Deraa before the British, and readers of *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* will remember there was a little "feeling" about this. On Peake's arrival he obtained good billets in the station building for his men and, whilst he was walking round the buildings, he saw suddenly the station bell! Although he had taken part in the capture of many stations along the Hedjaz line he had never been in time, or in the right place, to obtain the prized trophy, but this was his great moment, and in a second he had gone up a ladder and removed the bell of the most important junction on the Hedjaz railway.

Whilst he was detaching the bell from its fittings he saw his men, Egyptians and Gurkhas, roll out the station safe into the open, and before he could intervene they had blown off the door most expertly with a small charge of gun-cotton. The job was carried out so neatly and professionally that Peake suspected the master hand was an Egyptian from the Cairo underworld, and not a Gurkha from the highlands of India. Peake had warned his men against looting and they understood the seriousness of the crime, but possibly some bright minds conceived that the one time they could do this without punishment was when their own commanding officer was up on a ladder looting a bronze bell. The safe, however, was a complete disappointment as it contained nothing but books and packets of unissued tickets, and the bell also was a disappointment, as Lawrence begged



it off Peake a few days later. Apparently Lawrence was trying to obtain the complete sequence of station bells from Damascus to Medina, and, as this appeared to be the only reward this strange man sought for winning a campaign off his own bat, Peake did not begrudge it him.

As Peake's column was a comparatively slow-moving disciplined force they did not take part in the Arab mounted rush on the evacuated Damascus, but returned to Deraa with prisoners after moving northwards for some distance in the rear of the invading army. Here one evening, shortly after the Turkish armistice, Peake was sitting in his room when Lawrence came in suddenly and announced he was on his way back to England. The following is Peake's account of this meeting.

"I asked him why he was leaving us and he said : 'I am going because the entry into Damascus was the climax.' Then he added after a pause : 'Never wait for the anti-climax. Come out on the crest of the wave, and don't wallow out in its trough.'

"We talked for some time on various subjects and my mind went back to the first time we had met at Akaba—only a few months back, but so full of incidents had those months been they seemed like a lifetime. The impression he had made on me at that first meeting never left me, and now that he had come to say good-bye after fulfilling to the last iota that which he had set out to achieve—the freeing of Arabia from the Turks and the leading of the Arabs in the van of Allenby's victorious army into Damascus—he impressed me as before with his great understanding of the meaning of the campaign in Palestine and Arabia. He had studied the Arabs and had a wonderful knowledge of them, because they were to be the soldiers he was to lead, just as, before 1914, he had studied Syria, Trans-Jordan and most of the Middle Eastern countries because he knew, as he told me, that they would play a prominent part in the war which he foresaw many years before it came.

"Nor was his vision limited to Arabia and the Middle East. More and more as I came to know him I realised that he knew the coming victory would mark the passing of one age and the dawning of a new one. Even in 1918 he told me of the trials and tribulations which must follow the application of the Balfour Declaration, and the premonition of these weighed heavily upon him.

"Like many of the great commanders he was not a professional soldier, but the science of war was born in him ; and like others before him he improved his natural talents by a profound knowledge of military history.

"Possessed of a wonderful physique, though his stature was slight, he could outmatch the Arabs at their own game—camel-riding—and at the end of the hardest day's march he could sit cross-legged on the ground, and take his place at the camp fire for hours at a time among the men of his personal body-guard, or in the company of Feisal and his councillors.

"Rightly is he known as Lawrence of Arabia, since in that country he rose to fame by his extraordinary abilities and, like Clive of India,

paved the way on which others might follow him. Since his day there have been many so-called new Lawrences, but in reality there can be no new Lawrence of Arabia as there are no new Clives of India.

"So he went quietly and unassumingly from the country in which he had wrought so much, leaving a theatre of war, small no doubt, but in which he had been the dominating spirit and of which he had been the complete master. It is said that when the Emperor Napoleon lay dying at St. Helena a great storm swept over the island, and, strangely, just as Lawrence stood up to say good-bye, and leave Deraa and Syria for the last time, an earthquake shook the house and left us awed."

The following day there was another affecting farewell, for the Gurkhas received orders to rejoin their unit, as their task was done—and well done—to the east of Jordan. It was a wrench to see them go off in their lorries, for they had got on so well with the Camel Corps that it was almost like one unit with its spirit of comradeship. Peake went down to see them off, and was delighted to notice that many of the Egyptians had bought little souvenirs at the shops in the village which they gave on parting to their Gurkha friends.

The next people to receive their demobilization orders on the conclusion of the campaign were the Egyptian Camel Corps themselves, and this meant the final break-up of the Peake Demolition Company, Ltd., which had played its important part in a queer guerrilla campaign when interference with communications had been the main object to achieve. Orders arrived for Peake to take his company by road to Beer-sheba, and the march back by Irbid, Beisan, Jaffa and Gaza was full of interest, as for a part of the way they passed across several battlefields and saw everywhere signs of the great victory: abandoned guns, burnt-out aeroplanes, and, everywhere on the roads, crowds of weary prisoners trudging in under cavalry and infantry escorts. They passed through the famous Valley of Death, the Wadi Fara, between Nablus and Beisan, where on the 21st September a part of the 8th and all the 7th Armies of the Turks were spotted by our airmen retiring in disorder down this narrow valley. It is a precipitous gorge with the road cut out on one side, and here our bombing and machine-gunning aeroplanes caught the demoralized enemy and plastered them for four hours, the planes returning again and again to Ramleh for fresh supplies of bombs and ammunition. The road was blocked at the head of the pass and not a vehicle escaped, whilst the broken remnants of the armies, taking to the hills, were all rounded up and captured by our mounted troops the following day.

When Peake and his men passed through, the valley was full of unburied corpses, whilst guns, lorries and other transport, many of them wrecked, were standing abandoned just as the terror-stricken soldiery had left them when they ran to the hills to escape their awful fate in the valley below.

Whilst riding through Palestine on their way back to their base they met troops who had not only not seen British officers in Arab kit, but who were almost unaware that the Arabs were fighting against the Turks on the other side of Jordan. On arrival at Ludd, the big railway junction between Jerusalem and Jaffa, an officer of the heavy artillery came out to

ask Peake for one of the many bullocks he was driving with him as "rations on the hoof." He offered in return tins of jam, which he thought would be a great treat for an Arab officer, and after some discussion as to whether tea, sugar and bacon should not be included, the bullock was handed over. The deal being concluded the officer courteously complimented Peake on his excellent knowledge of English.

Another amusing episode occurred when Peake, accompanied by an officer of the corps—a peer of the realm—was riding at the head of their motley column when a private soldier on duty called on them to stop. As this order was not carried out immediately, he shouted: "Will you stop, you bloody black bastards?" The anger of Peake's companion, who was accustomed to being protected by Mr. Speaker when addressed far less rudely, was only abated by Peake's explaining that the soldier had not meant to insult them, as in his particular corps the word "bastard" was almost a term of endearment, and carried no slur with it; and that if they attempted to explain to him that they were officers and gentlemen he would probably do them bodily injury for trying to pull his leg.

On arrival at Beer-sheba, Peake handed over his men to the officer commanding the Egyptian Camel Corps and went down to Cairo by rail. After a short stay in the capital, which was buzzing with excitement and hilarity after the news of Allenby's great victory, he received order to go to Akaba and take over command of the town and immediate area.

## CHAPTER V

### THE LAND OF TRANS-JORDAN

"The rights of the chief are those of the people. The right of the people is to submit to the law." (*Napoleon's Maxims.*)

AS TRANS-JORDAN CAME INTO PROMINENCE DURING LAWRENCE'S DESERT campaign there is a tendency to regard it as a desert, but this description applies only to the eastern and extreme southern portions of the State, where the high land of the mountains of Edom and Moab falls away to the lower levels of Arabia proper, or Arabia Deserta as the Romans called it to distinguish it from Arabia Petraea, which comprises the western highlands and Sinai, and Arabia Felix, the area around the Yemen. Its boundary with Palestine runs roughly up the centre of the Wadi Araba, through the Dead Sea, to Lake Tiberias, and here at the River Yarmuk it meets the Syrian frontier running due east to Rutbah, where a straight line divides it from Irak territory. East and south it borders on Saudi Arabia, the southern frontier running about five miles from the small port of Akaba.

The cultivated part of Trans-Jordan is roughly all the northern portion between Amman, the capital, and the Palestine frontier, and also that tract of country which lies between the Hedjaz railway and the crest of the mountains that rise sheer from the Dead Sea depression. Here the

settled inhabitants of Trans-Jordan live and cultivate the land in the immediate vicinity of their villages. Wheat and barley are grown extensively, lentils, sim-sim for oil and in some parts, where there is irrigation from mountain streams, summer crops of maize and millet are raised. Fruit orchards thrive on the hillsides and olives, figs, vines and apricots are grown extensively, whilst the orange and lemon are beginning to attract attention. Speaking generally, the country lies too far north and too high for successful date growing, but in the various hot oases to the east and around Akaba they are produced in some quantity. Another part of Trans-Jordan that is extensively cultivated is the Wadi Sirhan, a deep depression that begins some seventy miles east of Amman and ends at Jauf, in the centre of northern Arabia. There are several small villages in this well-watered oasis, such as Azrak, where the Romans built a large citadel, and grazing rights in this big area are claimed by the Roalla tribe of Syria, though nowadays some of the Trans-Jordan tribes take their animals there in winter. Only the northern portion of the Wadi Sirhan is in Trans-Jordan, and all the remainder is in the territory of Ibn Saud.

The population of Trans-Jordan at the present time is only 300,000, and this is probably about one-fifth of the number the country supported in the prosperous days of the Roman Empire between A.D. 200 and A.D. 500. In those days Akaba was the main port for eastern trade, some of which came by sea and some by the main caravan route from the Hadhramaut, and Akaba was at that time connected with Amman, then Philadelphia, and Jerash, farther north, by a metalled highway which ran approximately just east of the crest of the mountains of Moab and Edom. Along this road are Petra, the ancient stronghold of the Nabatteans, Shobek, once a Crusader keep, Tafleleh, a place of orchards, and Kerak, the fortified town of Renaud de Chatillon, Prince of Trans-Jordan in the days after the First Crusade. North of Amman are Jerash, said to be the finest and most complete specimen of a Roman town in existence, and Ajlun and Umm Jimal.

It is evident when one sees not only the ruins of big Roman towns, but also those of villages, hamlets and farmhouses with their fallen orchard walls, and when one notices the traces of cultivation terracing along every hillside, now barren except for scrub growth, that this country must have been very well populated and extensively cultivated when *Pax Romana* controlled the land. The Romans, it would seem, held that part of Trans-Jordan that could be settled and cultivated, and their marches, or Inner Limes, ran approximately along the present Hedjaz railway, where there are the ruins of many forts and strongholds. Beyond these were the Outer Limes, where dwelt the Beduin tribes and who were subsidized to keep the peace, for one of the peculiarities of the Beduin throughout the ages is that he has managed to exist on subsidies, *Khafars*, *Baratils*, *Surras* and other forms of hush-money, paid to him by the Governments of peaceful countries in return for keeping the peace—monies handed over, not in return for doing anything, but solely to refrain from doing something.

Some idea of the size of the population in those days can be gathered from the amphitheatres, the almost complete ruins of which still remain. There are three of these in Jerash—one was used for comedies and the others

for more serious entertainments such as fights between gladiators and with wild beasts ; a huge amphitheatre at Amman, and another nearly as large in Petra. Most of these would seat some two thousand spectators, but to-day it would be difficult to obtain one audience of three hundred at a cinema.

In the days of the Romans there was a law that no nomad Arab could own land west of this main road, which was dictated by a variety of reasons, but the chief one, no doubt, was protection of the vines and olive-orchards from the grazing animals of the nomads. The nomad is a notoriously slack shepherd and will allow his camels, goats and sheep to break into orchards, committing incredible damage. There is in existence to-day a local law near Shobek which prohibits the Beduin from holding land west of the old road, and this no doubt dates back to Roman times.

The reason for the great decrease in population after the fall of the Roman Empire may be attributed to lack of public security, which followed the withdrawal of the Roman troops, and the infiltration of the Beduin. Trans-Jordan's markets for her produce lie outside her frontiers and, with every trade-route at the mercy of raiding Beduin, the inhabitants died off or migrated to other areas where they could live at peace. The country saw probably some slight revival during the short period of the Crusader principality east of Jordan, but Renaud de Chatillon was more a man of war than of peace, and there were constant raids into Saracen territory on his part and return raids by Saracen when his castles were besieged.

About a hundred years ago the Turkish Government awoke to the possibility of extended cultivation in Trans-Jordan, and some attempt to check the inroads of the Beduin was made, with the result that the village population and cultivation areas increased considerably. A certain proportion of Beduin ceased to be nomads and settled on the land, and there was also an influx of immigrants from Palestine.

The population to-day consists of these two types—the nomad Beduin of the desert, who exist mainly by grazing animals in the desert with a certain amount of barley growing during the winter rains, and the settled cultivators, who live in towns and villages chiefly in the northern and western portions of the State. There is a very wide gulf between these two types born of the fact that the former used to live at the expense of the latter, and there is not only a gulf, but an actual hostility, though it has not taken an active form for some sixteen years or so.

This hostility between the desert and the town, contempt on one side and distrust on the other, is one of the difficulties an administrator has to face in an Arab country and, as it has existed for some thousands of years, it is impossible to eradicate it in a lifetime. The situation is that the nomad tribes all over Arabia regard themselves as the *Herrenvolk*, in lieu of a better word, and as they were the fighting men they looked down on the townsfolk and cultivators with supreme contempt and treated them as serfs.

The nomad Beduin in the old days could always dominate the town and village dwellers because they were naturally more warlike, they could strike secretly and swiftly by marching long distances from the interior of their waterless deserts, and, after the raid, could retreat with their loot without fear of pursuit. Their sudden onslaughts were nearly always

successful, as surprise was the main factor and, moreover, they possessed the only means of transport in the desert, numerous fast-trotting camels, whilst the villagers and cultivators had few, and those they did own were slow, heavy animals suitable only for baggage transport. If one regards the desert as the sea and the cultivated areas as the land, the nomads were in the position of a naval power possessing complete control of the seas with all that this implies, and the cultivators could be likened to those nations who maintain only a few obsolete coast defence vessels.

Every village on the borders of the desert in the various oases was under the so-called protection of a desert tribe, and paid heavily for this protection either in money, or in cattle and produce. This subsidy money, or *khafar*, was nominally payment to the local nomad tribe for protection against other tribes, but actually it meant that so long as the *khafar* was paid the local tribe themselves would not raid the village: if it was withheld they would! The protection from other tribes either did not come into the picture, as there were no other tribes in the vicinity, or it failed to function because the hostile tribe was careful to select a time for a raid when the protecting tribe was away on some far-distant grazing ground. Unless the protecting tribe was affected personally by the raid they would not trouble to inflict punishment.

Needless to say, this system of protection was popular only with the recipients of the *khafar*, and the villagers resented it. They could, moreover, in most cases remember their villages being raided and their relatives murdered by the Beduin. The Turks took no very active steps against the subordination of the cultivator to the nomad, so that up to the outbreak of the war of 1914-18 the Beduin controlled the situation, though from time to time, if there was a particularly bad raid, a Turkish punitive force would set forth against the tribe responsible and employ no half-measures in teaching the Beduin a lesson. The normal attitude of the Turkish Pasha governing an area was a desire for peace and quietness at all cost—or, at any rate, peace on the surface—and if anyone disturbed that peace to too great extent he received a lesson that remained in the memory for the lifetime of that generation. It was no easy task for the Turkish Government to assemble and organize a force for a desert expedition, and the officials themselves objected to the discomfort of a small campaign, so that when a column did move out against the nomad, the aim and object was to administer a lesson that would not be forgotten easily and would have a lasting effect.

When the new Trans-Jordan State came into existence in 1918 with *Pax Britannica* as its motto, and with British officials responsible for its observance, the first thing to do was to break up the system for all time, but this was not easy. The Beduin insisted on their age-old rights and the villagers were nervous, wondering if the small police force could really protect them against the raider. One of the first things Peake did on becoming an official in the newly-formed State was to take the law into his own hands when a sudden raid was made on the village of El Rumman, in the north of Trans-Jordan. He happened to arrive in the village with a small force immediately after it had been raided by about twenty-five men of the Beni Hassan tribe, who had carried off all the available cattle. The

inhabitants of this particular village were Turcomans, settled there by the Turks, and as the race are sturdy fighting men they were not frightened of nomad Arabs, but only of an Arab government, which would inevitably take sides against them. With the backing of Peake and his men they set out after the raiders, caught up with them and captured them, and every man of the party received thirty lashes with a *khurbag* on that part of the anatomy that the natural modesty of the Beduin would prevent him from showing to his relative. After this the little village of El Roman had no further trouble with its nomad neighbours.

The peculiarity of the situation was that the average villager in Trans-Jordan, who is either a descendant of one of the nomad tribes or an immigrant from Palestine, is a quite tough person and in every way is capable of meeting a nomad Beduin in hand-to-hand combat. The Beduin is not such a redoubtable fighting man as he and his immediate neighbours suppose, but he has traded on the propaganda that he is invincible so successfully that usually the villagers put up little or no resistance when attacked. It required very little encouragement from the British officials for the cultivator to obtain confidence in himself and to learn by practical experience that the nomad of the desert, when he is resisted, is not such a hardy and savage fighter as he would have people believe; and in the early days of the formation of the Trans-Jordan State certain villages gave the raiding Beduin some very warm and unexpected receptions.

With improved security to the villager and cultivator comes a natural increase in their numbers, and with it a tendency to put more land under cultivation. In the old days when the nomad ruled the land the tiller of the soil could only farm those areas which were in the immediate vicinity of his village, and if he ventured farther afield he was at the mercy of the raider. When, therefore, the question of increased acreage arose the villager found himself up against the nomad, whose unofficial rights of ownership, acquired by grazing, put him in possession of square miles of land of which he made not the slightest use, but which he refused to sell or hand over. Sometimes in close proximity to a densely-populated village with insufficient land for cultivation there would be an area with a natural water supply which lent itself to exploitation, but nothing could be done about it without direct Government intervention because some neighbouring tribe of Beduin claimed rights of grazing in the district which they seldom, if ever, exercised. Even when the Government stepped in and took over the land, as property of the State to be disposed of to those willing to cultivate it, the villagers were chary of committing themselves. Their argument—an extremely sound one—was that all would be well so long as the present Government was in power to protect them. But Governments in the East are very ephemeral and policies change. In the future the Beduin might be in the ascendancy again with official approval, and the fate of the cultivators as occupiers of land that had been estreated from the nomad would not be a happy one.

The amusing side of this hostility and wide divergence of views between the Beduin and the villager is the attitude of the various British administrators who serve in Arab lands, but perhaps amusing is not quite the word to use. In the early days of their service they will throw in their lot with

one side or the other, and will become either pro-nomad or pro-cultivator in all things. It all depends on the character and personality of the administrator himself as to which side will claim him. If he is one of those men with modern ideas of progress, a desire to make two blades of grass grow where one grew before, and if wasted and unexploited lands exasperate him, he will side naturally with the cultivator and, though probably he is willing to admit the natural charm and appeal of the desert Beduin, he will nevertheless regard him as an eleventh-century nuisance and a most efficient bar to all progress. Every time he tries to put some agricultural scheme into operation he bumps up against an age-old Beduin right that obstructs him on every side, and every time he instigates a cultivator to plant an orchard of vines, figs or olives he infringes on some grazing area and the nomads, to insist on their rights, let in their goats and camels to destroy every tree.

If, on the other hand, the administrator has a streak of poetry and romance in him, then to him the Beduin is the ideal man. He sympathizes in every way with the nomad's eleventh-century outlook and regards any interference with his old Arabian rights and customs as the worst form of vandalism. "Here, by the grace of God," he argues, "is a delightful and romantic survival of the past with all its old-world associations and charm, and any attempt to alter things will either force the Beduin to become a cultivator, which God forbid, or cause him to die out." This point of view, needless to say, is shared by the traveller who visits Arab lands and afterwards writes a book on his experiences. He is not in the country long enough to appreciate both sides of the case, and as his guides and caravans are supplied by the Beduin, he is led to see only the nomad point of view. Moreover, the Beduin is out to please and give satisfaction, and this he can do more successfully than any other race in the world—when he likes. The traveller only comes in contact with the villagers when he buys supplies or hires a car, and as he is usually thoroughly exploited—and, after all, what is a tourist for if he is not to be exploited?—he returns to write his book with a most decided Beduin bias, and not one good word for the cultivator; and even less than that for the administrator who backs him.

There is, of course, no argument as to which type has the greater appeal, for the Beduin with his pure breeding, his natural easy manners, his aristocratic contempt for trade and the sordid things of life, is a most charming man to meet and a most intelligent one. Perhaps the late Sir Mark Sykes summed him up better than anyone: "The Beduin is, indeed, the strangest of all mankind. His material civilization is about on a par with that of a Bushman, yet his brain is as elaborately and subtly developed as that of any Englishman with a liberal education. There is no reasonable argument he cannot follow, no situation which he cannot immediately grasp, no man whom he cannot comprehend; yet there is no manual act he can perform."

The unfortunate cultivator has no such charm—his unhappy and uncertain position throughout the generations has eliminated all this. At the mercy of the Beduin and the official tax collector he has of necessity become an opportunist, a seizer of the main chance, and a money-grabber. His standard of honour is not particularly high and his word cannot always be trusted, but who can blame him, for he has never been allowed to



indulge in such luxuries as honour and veracity? His redeeming qualities are his diligence, his application to hard work, and his ability to make both ends meet in the most difficult circumstances.

This gulf between the nomad and the villager is one that the highly educated leaders of the Pan-Arab movement ignore completely. Possibly they are unaware that it exists, for, to quote Peake, the average Englishman who has read Doughty's *Arabia Deserta* has a greater understanding of the desert Beduin than most educated Arabs who dwell in towns and cities. He made this discovery when there was some disagreement in the ranks of the Beduin forces, which was due entirely to some senior Arab failing to grasp the nomad point of view. That the gulf exists was proved during the various Palestine troubles and, despite the fact that the leaders of the Arab movement tried to enlist the sympathies and active assistance of the Beduin, they failed to obtain very much response, for the egental attitude of the tribesmen was that this was entirely a cultivators' disagreement, and therefore no concern of theirs.

Ibn Khaldun, a Berber writer, likened the Arab world to a stormy sea of wild breakers, where one strong tribe after another billows in from the desert to break and lose its virility on the cultivation. This is particularly true of Trans-Jordan, where many of the settled villagers of the present time are the descendants of some great fighting tribe in the past, who forsook the hard life of the desert for the flesh-pots of civilization and settled down in the land they had conquered. To-day history has repeated itself and new races are working up gradually from the wastes of the Hedjaz, for practically all the big tribes now in Trans-Jordan have been in occupation of the country for less than three hundred years.

In some respects Peake was an exception to the general rule that British administrators rally invariably to the camp of either the cultivator or the nomad, for the Beduin was his first love as he had fought with them during the war in Trans-Jordan, but when he took over the reins of office in the country his sole object in view was the foundation of a small, peaceful State, which would stand on its own legs in course of time, and to achieve this the country had to be prosperous to enable it to pay its own way. There could be no question of favouring one section of the population at the expense of another, but, since the cultivator was the only member of the community who could create prosperity and pay taxes, therefore the cultivator had to be protected and allowed to carry on his good work without interference. Peake was quite prepared to see that the Beduin retained some of his rights, but, as so many of his rights consist of wrongs done to others, their normal activities had to be curtailed to some extent. Despite the fact that on this account Peake had to back the cultivator rather than the Beduin, it is a remarkable testimony to his personality and sense of absolute fairness that he was possibly more popular among the tribes of the desert than among the settled folk in the towns and villages.

The following, in Peake's own words, provides an enlightening appreciation of the past and present policies in Trans-Jordan.

"The war of 1914-1918 saw some of the Arabs of northern Arabia rise against the Turks. The numbers actually affected, however, were

really very few, and they may be divided into two main headings : (A) those who were really imbued with nationalist sentiment, consisting of educated men from Syria and Irak, and to a much lesser degree from Palestine. (B) restless tribesmen ever ready to rebel against any settled government, Arab or foreign, and paid in this case by a foreign nation (ourselves) to rebel against their masters, the Turks.

"So long as the war continued and there was a large British force present to maintain order, the nomads fulfilled a useful role, but as soon as hostilities were over and the Turkish Government had collapsed, leaving no strong controlling party to take its place, the Beduin or nomad population began to prey on the settled people. This, one might say, is the normal state of affairs in Arabia, as all through history the Arab townsmen and villagers have been ruled by a foreign power when they have been very prosperous ; or by the nomad tribesmen when they have been miserably poor and oppressed.

"When I first came to Trans-Jordan the nomads were beginning to encroach on the cultivated areas. The Arab Government in Damascus was too weak to force back the Beduin ; and had not the British stepped into Trans-Jordan and the French into Syria there is little doubt that both countries, with the possible exception of the Lebanon, would soon have reverted to tribal rule and poverty.

"I set to work, therefore, at once to check this growing power of the nomad tribes. My policy was to raise a Force from the sedentary, or village, Arabs, which would gradually be able to check the Beduin and allow an Arab Government to rule the country without fear of interference from tribal chiefs. This could not be done quickly, as not only would it take several years to raise a force of sufficient strength and prestige to enable the Arab Government to eradicate the results of years of post-war tribal rule, but also care had to be taken not to move too quickly and thus cause the sheikhs to rebel.

"It would have been easy to establish British rule and control enforced by British troops, but it would have caused much trouble and expense. Besides which I was always convinced that the old days of direct British rule were passing, or indeed had passed. Nationalism imported from the West with modern mass education had come to stay and was a force with which one had to reckon.

"I was of opinion also that the more power we gave to the Arab Government and the less we interfered with them the better it would be for us in the long run. Speaking generally, an Arab Government formed from the educated town and village dwellers would be able to maintain a tolerably good rule provided we maintained a watching brief, and saw that the police forces were sufficiently strong to keep order and prevent the Beduin from robbing the farmers and merchants.

"For some years all went well as King Ibn Saud had not extended his empire as far as the Wadi Sirhan, nor had he captured the Hedjaz, and therefore the Beduin could carry on his age-old pastime of raiding each other, but after the fall of the Hashimite dynasty in Mecca Ibn Saud's dominions extended automatically to the frontiers of Trans-Jordan. Then raiding instead of being an inter-tribal business at once

took on an international status. Ibn Saud allowed his tribesmen to raid into Trans-Jordan and refused either to admit that they had done so or to return the loot. When the Trans-Jordan tribes raided in return into his country he at once petitioned the British Government and received a ready hearing. First of all the Royal Air Force with indifferent success tried to prevent raiding by the employment of aeroplanes, and this having failed a special section of the Arab Legion was raised to deal with the nomad tribes. At the same time Major Glubb, who had had experience of Beduin matters, was brought in to be my second-in-command, with the special duty of commanding the new desert police, who were to be raised from the Beduin tribes. This policy was excellent, and the officer selected to run it under my direction could not have been better chosen.

"Unfortunately, however, this new desert force was brought into being after the regular Arab Legion had completed its task of establishing public security in the settled part of the country. Consequently we soon saw the British Government providing money with which to subsidise tribes—the old evil of the *surra* under another name; giving them armed cars with machine-guns, wireless sets, forts and other adjuncts to militarism, which had been denied to the old Arab Legion, who had had to carry on its task without them. This, however, would not have mattered a great deal if the Desert Force had been kept as police and not trained as an Army unit. The temptation, however, was too great, and gradually we saw the desert nomads being turned into soldiers with modern arms and transport, while the old Arab Legion formed from the dwellers in the towns and villages remained for the most part mere police.

"So long as the strong hand of Britain retains control there is little danger in this policy, but should, in the future, a growing demand for independence be met by the withdrawal of British officers then we shall have given the tribal sheikhs an arm with which they can once again dominate the settled people, and such domination can only lead to poverty and misery. My policy was always to prevent power from getting into the hands of the tribal chiefs as the country could not prosper if this occurred."

## CHAPTER VII

### EARLY DAYS OF ARAB GOVERNMENT

"If the sailors become too numerous the ship sinks." (*Arab Proverb.*)

PEAKE ARRIVED IN AKABA ON THE EVENING OF THE 10TH NOVEMBER, 1918, and found the greater part of the garrison there packed up ready to return in the ship that had brought him, but as news of the Armistice was expected at any moment it was decided the vessel should remain at anchor until



T. E. LAWRENCE'S VISIT TO TRANS-JORDAN AS AN OFFICIAL OF THE COLONIAL OFFICE IN 1921

*Names (left to right):* Colonel T. E. Lawrence, H.H. The Emir Abdulla, Air Vice-Marshal Sir Geoffrey Salmond, Brig.-General Sir Wyndham Deedes.



MEN OF THE ARAB LEGION WITH PEAKE PASHA IN THE CENTRE

the message announcing peace was received on the wireless. Whilst waiting, everyone in Akaba went on board, and the only work performed on that ship until she sailed shortly after midday on the 11th was done by the stewards, who were run off their legs. The aftermath of this occurred some months later when the captain was asked officially to explain why the consumption of alcohol had been so excessive on that day, and the captain passed the correspondence to Peake with a minute inscribed upon it: "Passed to you for explanation, please." Peake wrote on the memorandum: "For explanation please see date," and this appeared to have been accepted as satisfactory as no further questions about the delicate topic of excessive alcohol consumption were received.

The garrison at Akaba after the departure of this ship consisted of half a battalion of Egyptian infantry, a platoon of British infantry, and about four hundred Egyptian Labour Corps, and the main work of everybody was to shift into ships that arrived at infrequent intervals the vast stocks of ammunition and supplies that were stacked up all along the shore. The British detachment were constantly asking to be sent home for demobilization, and their favourite song at this time was the dreary:

"Hi tiddley hi ti—send me back to Blighty.  
Blighty is the place for me."

Peake obtained no relief from this hackneyed topic as if he went down to the lines of the Egyptians he found them singing the equally morbid and depressing:

"*Ya azizi ayuni, biddi rowa baladi.*"

which being interpreted means: "Oh, my Darling, Light of my eyes, I want to go back to my own country."

The civil administration all over Trans-Jordan at this time was inchoate and puzzling, due to the fact that no one in authority was very clear as to what the future of Trans-Jordan was to be, who was to rule it, and what were its actual boundaries. The British Government had far too much on its hands to worry much about the future state of Trans-Jordan, British officers and officials on the spot had all of them totally different ideas on the subject, and at least two Arab States with quite opposite views were endeavouring to function in the country.

In Akaba, for instance, a *kaimakam* (military governor) had been appointed by some person or persons unknown, and this *kaimakam* received his orders direct from the Government of King Hussein in Mecca. At the same time he was given quite contradictory orders by the newly-created Arab Government in Damascus. Luckily the *kaimakam* was one of those exceptional characters that take orders from no one, and he passed his time most pleasantly ploughing a lonely furrow so that the confusion that might have arisen from trying to serve two masters did not occur in this particular case.

At Maan, the next town of any importance, there was another *kaimakam*, who had been appointed by the Damascus Government and informed that he was quite independent of Akaba. The representative at Akaba, however, was instructed by Mecca that Maan was directly under his control, and that he should exert his authority. Luckily neither *kaimakam* had ever heard

of the word "exert," and the Military Governor at Maan, being another of those broad-minded gentlemen who believe in peace at any price, the machinery of government continued to turn over though it worked somewhat creakily. A bond of friendship between the two *kaimakams* was their appreciation for whisky, which they drank neat. They both complained with every mouthful that it was not so good as it had been before the war—a fact that so many Englishmen and Scotsmen noticed—which seemed in their opinion to constitute a most excellent reason for not having had a war at all.

Although all Trans-Jordan was suffering from birth-pangs, and suffering acutely, the situation at Maan and Akaba was further complicated by the fact that both these places were claimed as part and parcel of the Hedjaz State, now Saudi Arabia, and to this the British Government did not agree. Actually this question of southern boundaries is still a bone of contention, and Saudi Arabia claims that these towns should be included in her territory.

Further north, in places like Amman, Kerak, Ajlun and Irbid, various British officers were endeavouring to form some sort of government and maintain some semblance of public security, which is not easy in an Arab land when the controlling power has been suddenly removed and that delightful state of *mafish hakooma* (no government) exists, with no taxes to pay, and no one responsible to anyone. All these officers were doing their best and working extremely hard, but few of them had had any previous experience of the East, or the faintest conception of how Oriental races should be administered. Their presence in the country in various responsible positions had been entirely due to the necessity for finding someone to fill posts quickly from the nearest sources of supply, and providing the best material available considering the circumstances.

As the British Army advanced through Sinai, Palestine, Trans-Jordan and Syria, making moves ahead sometimes in leaps of a hundred miles or more, it was necessary to leave behind to guard these lengthening lines of communications small detachments of troops, and also to drop officers at every town of importance to act as local commandants in the ever-extending OETA—otherwise Occupied Enemy's Territory Administration. Here again the old Army system of ordering colonels to select suitable officers from their commands for this very important work did not pan out always quite as was expected, for it was obviously absurd to expect a battalion commander to lose the services of his most efficient subordinates, on whom he had to rely in a tight position, and send them off to some post from which they would never be retrieved. Quite naturally the officers detailed for this difficult post were those whose services he would miss least in his command.

The fact that a man was not an ideal regimental officer did not necessarily mean, of course, that he would not make an excellent administrator, where military zeal and efficiency are by no means essential, and many of these discards proved later that, though by no stretch of the imagination could they fit into the circumscribed life of the "old Regiment," they could, on the other hand show they had imagination, an ability to work with old or worn-out tools, and make a complete success of a job with which the average efficient soldier could not cope in any circumstances. At the same

time the system did enable commanders to rid themselves of a number of those queer, but otherwise delightful characters, who are calculated never to see the wood for the trees and who at the first opportunity jump into the saddle of some hobby-horse and ride off into the blue. There are quite a number of such men in the world, endowed usually with exceptional intellect which they can never employ to any advantage and always with charm of manner and personality. In peace-time their shortcomings are not apparent, but they are washed up as jetsam during wars into a variety of positions where they constitute a trial and burden to everyone with whom they come in contact; and the fact that their charm and general likeability never deserts them causes them to be more of an embarrassment than otherwise.

There is the story of a temporary officer of this type who during the last war, by reason of his knowledge of Arabic and of the East generally, went right behind the Turkish lines in Palestine and stayed there in disguise for a week or more. When he returned he brought back a considerable amount of most interesting information about antiquities and ruins the other side of the Turkish trenches, some appealing notes about flora and fauna and the customs of the local people, but he had quite overlooked the necessity for finding out anything about the numbers of the Turks or their location.

As the result of this a variety of queer little governments were being formed all over Trans-Jordan, where isolated British officers endeavoured to the best of their ability to achieve some form of rule until such time as the status of the country was decided. The great trouble they had to contend with was lack of funds with which to achieve anything. With the removal of the Turk had gone the taxation system, which though lenient was suitable for the people and their poverty, and which at the same time had provided sufficient money for the payment of necessary officials and the maintenance of a small police force. The question of taxation in a Mahommedan country is a difficult one. There are certain taxes which are mentioned in the Koran as being reasonable, and these as a rule the people will pay willingly, or as willingly as anyone will pay taxes in this world, but any tax, however trifling, that has not the backing of religion is suspect from the start.

One of the drawbacks to British administration is that its thoroughness and efficiency costs more usually than the natural conditions of trade and agriculture in the country can afford to pay, and the average Briton cannot accept any compromise. It is against all his traditions to run a government that he knows is full of weak spots, with small irregularities here, discrepancies there and possibly corruption in a mild form everywhere. The administration must be perfect and watertight, with the right man in every post, and all this costs money besides being almost impossible to achieve in a short time.

At one place in Trans-Jordan in its early days Peake found a government calling itself the State of Moab, which gave it a strong Biblical flavour. So far as it went it was a most enterprising little government, for it obtained the necessary funds for its maintenance by the sale of a concession for oil to an optimistic Englishman, who thought it a good idea to get in on the



ground floor immediately the war was over. The Arab council of the State of Moab had, of course, no authority to sell a concession for oil boring to anyone, and the English prospector no doubt suspected this, but nevertheless he paid over £500 for the shadowy right, and the State of Moab for a time was the richest in the land, and was unique in the fact that it managed to balance its budget.

Up in the extreme north of Trans-Jordan a British official, short of funds, police, officials and everything that goes to form a government, evolved an ingenious system by which he formed four separate and independent districts which were normally most hostile to each other. By this arrangement he could preserve peace and public security by threatening any recalcitrant district with an attack by the others. This system worked like a charm, and as long as this official was in power harmony reigned.

Perhaps the most amusing of these small local governments was that formed by the Arabs themselves at Tafileh, as although there were no funds available to pay anyone a staff extensive enough to run a whole country was formed. It consisted of a *Kaimakam* of whom no one took any notice, a Qadi but no one to judge, a Mufti though no one prayed, a Postmaster without a post office, and a Telegraph Master and no telegraph. There was also a Minister of Finance and a Treasury, but this post was also a sinecure, for there was no money. The strangest official of all was the local doctor, or, to give him his correct title, the Minister of Public Health. When Peake visited Tafileh in the early days shortly after the formation of the Trans-Jordan State this official showed him with pride his only book which constituted his guide to Medicine, Surgery and Medical Jurisprudence. It was an out-of-date copy of *Pears' Annual*. Before Peake left Tafileh this doctor gave him a list of drugs that were urgently required in the town and begged him to obtain them for him in Jerusalem. Before doing so Peake showed the document to a British medical officer and discovered that it contained a list of aphrodisiacs of varying potencies and nothing else! As Peake said, despite all these difficulties he never met a merrier lot of people and a more hospitable community, and the three days he spent there on his first inspection were enlivened with constant roars of laughter.

Peake found little or nothing to do in Akaba during those early days, for the importance of the little town shrunk daily as the accumulated munitions of war were sent away and as the small command dwindled. The tiny seaport has its history and has seen days of prosperity and greatness. Moses and his host must have passed this way during the later stages of the Forty Years' Wanderings. Later as Elath, a place of trees—and the descendants of these trees still surround the small town—it was a subsidiary anchorage to Ezion-Geber, and from here the ships of Tarshish set out on their three-year voyages to the land of Ophir. Then after a break of some fifteen hundred years it became the naval base of Renaud de Chatillon, and, as Eyleh, was a shipping centre from which the Norman prince harried the coast of Arabia and stopped the annual pilgrimage to Mecca. For the short period of one year during the Revolt in the Desert it had awakened to life and importance again, but its third rising from obscurity had been very ephemeral and it was visibly shrinking back again to its normal state—

two narrow streets, a custom house and a semi-ruined sixteenth-century castle.

The few British soldiers left at Akaba found considerable amusement and interest in bombing fish with Mills grenades, and became most proficient at it. There are several varieties of the most excellent fish in the Gulf of Akaba, which are extremely hard to net, as their great shoals are invariably swimming round jagged rocks, but a bomb placed neatly in one of these great swarms results in enormous yields. The local Arab fishermen were so thrilled by this simple and labour-saving method introduced by the British that since those days they have used nothing else. To-day when the fishing fleet puts to sea—two feluccas—it carries neither nets nor lines, but only a store of home-made bombs and fuses.

In November, 1919, after a return to the Sudan for a month, Peake was sent to Rafa, in Southern Palestine, where he took over the command again of the Egyptian Camel Corps, which was then responsible for maintaining law and order on the frontiers of Palestine, where the lawless Beduin from the hills east of the Wadi Araba were raiding the flocks of the more settled inhabitants around Gaza and Beer-sheba and also into Sinai as far as El Arish. This necessitated constant patrols down the sparsely-watered stretch of harsh desert between Beer-sheba and Akaba, where everything favoured the raider. Secure and well hidden in one of the many deep gorges which intersect this stretch of mountainous country the Beduin would wait until their spies informed them that the Camel Corps were away at the opposite end of their beat and then make a lightning raid on some village or encampment, carrying off the camels and flocks.

There is only one method of dealing with this type of raiding, and that is recognition and enforcement of tribal responsibility. Punitive expeditions are too expensive to maintain, and, moreover, are usually ineffective, whereas, if the Government are firm and hold the sheikh and other members of the tribe responsible in every way for the misdeeds of the few, raiding is nipped in the bud. However, in those early days the various British Governments functioning in Palestine and Trans-Jordan had not reconciled themselves to this seemingly unusual and unjust method of maintaining order, though it is a system the Arabs have recognized and practised among themselves for some two thousand years. Looking for a small party of raiders in a vast wilderness is like searching for a needle in a haystack, for, though everybody in the black tents knows their whereabouts and their future movements, nobody is going to disclose this information to the police who are looking for them, as in the desert the normal attitude to be adopted is that of being "agin the Government" on all occasions, and to know nothing whatsoever when asked a question.

Although Peake's Camel Corps fought no decisive actions with the Beduin raiders, and a heavily-equipped force is useless against these elusive cameliers who travel light and live light, he acquired a considerable amount of useful knowledge about a little-known part of Palestine, which is usually alluded to now as the Negeb. It is in this part of the world—well cultivated and populated in Roman days—that the Jews wish to start settlements for their surplus population, and it remains to be seen if anything further will be done in the matter after this war ends. At the present time only a few

of the poorest nomads graze their flocks in the depression, and for the first ten years after the last war it was the land of the outlaws, being conveniently situated for raids on villages as far north as Hebron, as far west as Nekhl, and as far east as Shobek and Tafilah. Peake's many patrols gave him an opportunity of working up to the Trans-Jordan highlands by way of the many narrow valleys that intersect this vast barrier of mountains; a country into which no European has penetrated since the days of the Crusaders.

Early in 1920 the Egyptian Camel Corps was sent back to Cairo for disbandment, and Peake was offered a post in the Palestine Police which had come into being shortly after the Armistice. On arrival at Jerusalem he was told he was posted to Trans-Jordan, and that he was to go to Amman at once to report on the state and general efficiency of the gendarmerie in that country. In those days the motor highway that now runs down from Jerusalem to Jericho, crosses the Jordan by the Allenby bridge and then winds up the valley of Nimrin to Amman did not exist, and it was necessary to ride from Shunet Nimrin to Es Salt. On arrival at Shunet Nimrin, Peake obtained a hint of the state of affairs waiting him farther east, for though notification of his visit had been sent to officials at Es Salt no arrangements had been made for his transport, and he had to make the latter part of his journey on the borrowed mount of a policeman.

At Es Salt he found three officers of the gendarmerie, who were not inclined to be helpful, and after the force in this town had been inspected, the possibility of going on to Amman was discussed. The report had come through that Sheikh Mithgal of the Beni Sakhr and Said Khair, *Omdeh* (mayor) of Amman, had taken over the town as part of the Arab State, and were determined not to allow any British to enter.

The following morning, however, with a very small escort, but wearing his best uniform and with his sword by his side, Peake rode into the town as a representative of His Britannic Majesty, and so far from there being any hostility there was, on the other hand, a most magnificent eight-course luncheon waiting for him with all the notables of Amman attending. On the surface, everything in Amman appeared to be functioning excellently, but after a few days in the town it became obvious that this was the thinnest of veneers, and that actually things were far from satisfactory. He obtained visual proof that there was little or no public security in the town the morning after his arrival as, whilst taking his usual ride before breakfast, he passed down the main street of Amman, and here he was surprised to see a man with a drawn sword chasing another. Thinking that this must be some Oriental game he did nothing, but suddenly to his horror he saw the swordsman close in on the man in front and deal him a terrific downward blow which literally cleft his head in twain. The murderer then dodged down the street, the onlookers making not the slightest attempt to detain him, and, although Peake called on the bystanders and a policeman who was on point duty to assist in the hunt, they made no move and the man then disappeared up a narrow turning where Peake could not follow him on his horse, and got clear away.

The small force of gendarmerie that Peake found functioning in Amman were obviously of the wrong type, with all the vices of the Turkish regime

and none of its good points. The officers were of the coffee-house loafing class who seldom troubled to dress in uniform, and the men were lazy and dissatisfied, having received no pay for many months. It was plain that no semblance of order could be maintained in the town and its area unless a properly disciplined force was raised, and Peake therefore returned to Jerusalem with a demand for authority to enlist one hundred men and five officers whose pay would be guaranteed by Palestine. This request was granted by Sir Herbert Samuel without demur, and Peake came back to Amman to raise the new force which was to be called the Arab Legion.

## CHAPTER VIII

## FORMATION OF THE ARAB LEGION

"Men of the plains and hill men, men born to warrior roles,  
Tall men of matchless ardour, small men with mighty souls."

(*R. E. Vernede.*)

THE PERMISSION TO ENROL ONE HUNDRED MEN WAS TO BE THE INITIAL MOVE in the formation of the force known as the Arab Legion, the raising and direct command of which has been Peake's main task in Trans-Jordan, but at the same time it must be remembered always that Peake, although he looks and is every inch a soldier, was first and foremost an administrator. During his constant patrols of inspection throughout the country to visit his detachments he came in close contact with both the nomad tribes and the villagers, and, as to the Trans-Jordan Arab there was in the land only one British official who did things, they brought all their complaints and difficulties to him. In this way Peake found himself pressing in one place the claims of a village for some irrigation scheme, in another the opening up of a market, and in a third the construction of a road to facilitate trade; and when these adjuncts to progress materialized Peake obtained the credit for them.

In October, 1920, when Peake raised the Arab Legion it consisted of five officers, seventy-five cavalry and twenty-five mounted machine-gunners, and two months later, when a force for Kerak was found necessary, a further two officers and fifty men were enlisted. In 1921 the Legion was increased to about a thousand men, consisting of two cavalry squadrons, two infantry companies, one machine-gun company, two mountain guns and a signal section, and later when the existing town police force and prison service was incorporated into the Legion it numbered, roughly, one thousand three hundred men. In 1926, when the Trans-Jordan State took over the Maan vilayet from the Hedjaz, a further three hundred men were enlisted, one hundred of whom were camel corps for the desert districts around Maan.

In 1927 the Trans-Jordan Frontier Force, late the Palestine Gendarmerie, was transferred from Palestine to Trans-Jordan and the Arab Legion was

reduced in consequence to one thousand men, the machine-gun companies, artillery and signals being disbanded. The reason for the transfer of this force was the steady incursion of the Wahibeen Arabs towards the Trans-Jordan frontier from the south and east.

In 1930, on the arrival of Major Glubb to act as second-in-command of the Legion with the special task of checking raids from the Wahibeen and to act as peace-maker and law-giver to the frontier tribes east of the Hedjaz railway, a further one hundred and fifty men were enlisted to work under this officer. The new recruits were all Beduin from the nomad tribes of Trans-Jordan; and a portion of the new contingent was camelry and the remainder an armed car detachment.

During the years between 1936-39 a further six hundred men were enlisted to cope with the situation that had arisen owing to the state of open rebellion in Palestine. The inhabitants of Trans-Jordan remained loyal throughout this protracted struggle, but insidious attempts were made by the Arab party in Palestine to spread the rising across the Jordan and, moreover, bands of rebels frequently crossed over the frontier when pursued by Palestine police and British troops.

The greater part of the Arab Legion were men enlisted from the towns and villages, and there were few real nomad Beduin in the force until the special contingent of Beduin was raised for service with Glubb under Peake's control. Among the men also were a certain number of Circassians and Turcomans enlisted from the village settlements of those people, which the Turks had instituted many years previously with a view to building up small colonies of these mountain folk to act in case of trouble as a barrier against the Arab. The officers of the Legion at its creation were for the most part ex-officers of Arab birth from the Turkish regular army, and, as time went on, young recruits were obtained from the better-educated youth of Trans-Jordan.

Whilst the enlistment of the first contingent of the Arab Legion was proceeding in 1920 Peake took a small house in Amman and ordered one of the newly-joined gendarmes, an ex-Turkish policeman, to move his baggage into it. The following morning, when he woke up, Peake found this gendarme lying asleep across the doorway, and, on asking him what he was doing there, the recruit replied that he had appointed himself as personal orderly to Peake and that he had no intention of leaving him in any circumstances. It was in this way that Peake obtained the services of, or, to be more exact, was adopted by, Ahmed Salem, who remained with him the whole of his time in Trans-Jordan and who has now come home with him to England.

Ahmed Salem belongs to the Abbad tribe of semi-nomads who occupy the hill country round the Wadi Sir, west of Amman, in the summer, and who migrate every winter to the valley of the Jordan near Es Salt. Ahmed himself was brought up in the Circassian village of Es Sir, learning to speak that language fluently together with a good working knowledge of Turkish and Shishan, another Circassian tongue spoken by a few villages. He therefore had the command of four languages, including his native Arabic, and he was therefore of the greatest value to Peake as he could act as an interpreter with both Turks and Circassians, of whom there were

a number in the Arab Legion. Also in times of internal troubles, when every conversation on the telephone was listened to and reported to the leaders of the disaffected Arab party, Peake was able through Ahmed Salem to send messages to Legion officers who understood either Turkish, Shishan or Circassian, and thus defeated the telephone operators, who knew only Arabic with sometimes a slight smattering of English.

The first time Ahmed Salem ever left his native Trans-Jordan and went out into the great world was when he accompanied Peake to Cairo to attend the Cairo Conference assembled by Mr. Churchill. Ahmed was not so much interested in the lift of Shephard's Hotel, which usually amazes the Arabs from the desert, but rather in the big rotating door on the veranda, which to him seemed the eighth wonder of the world. The constant bustle and movement at this door was a great attraction to him, and he was always to be found standing by it, where, in his uniform and Arab head-dress, he made a striking figure, and attracted much interest, particularly from American tourists whose first idea on arriving in Egypt is to see a real Arab "sheek" from the desert.

He made friends with all the visitors to the hotel and also with the hotel staff, which is not so easy, and the hall porter, either to oblige Ahmed, or to lend the correct desert tone to a car taking a party of tourists to see the Pyramids, arranged for him usually to occupy the seat next to the driver. This gave him the idea that he could take the seat next to the driver in any car which drew up at the hotel, and one day Peake came down the steps to see Ahmed getting into the front seat of the car in which our present Prime Minister was seated. Peake went down at once to interfere, but Mr. Churchill, grasping the situation at once, insisted on his remaining, and Ahmed Salem now boasts frequently of this honour to his friends in England. He does not meet many men in this country who have had the opportunity of driving in the same car as the Prime Minister.

Like all good Arab servants, he considered it his duty to protect his master not only from serious danger, but also from the petty annoyances of life, and in the East these are many: mothers of prisoners, who call at the house at all hours of the day asking that their sons should be released from gaol forthwith; fathers of the lame, deaf and half-witted, who insist that their sons should be enlisted into the Legion just to draw pay and eat bread at the Government's expense; privates who desire promotion, and think that a back-door interview is the best method of obtaining it; and officers, who wish to avoid being pensioned off for age and call round with newly-dyed moustaches to emphasize their youth.

One day as Peake was coming home from his office a man followed him up the steps of his house offering to sell him a live owl, and on seeing him Ahmed seized a stick and chased him up the street. Peake protested at this unnecessary display of violence, and Ahmed replied: "Everyone knows a *booma* (owl) brings bad luck, and the man undoubtedly wished to do you an injury."

Now Ahmed Salem is living in England with his master and acting as valet as before, but in these days of labour shortage he lends a hand with the car, does an odd job in the garden, and makes himself generally useful. The war has unfortunately prevented him from getting home to Trans-

Jordan for a holiday as he anticipated, and it seems sometimes that he misses the companionship of his own race and the cheery evenings in the village coffee-shops after dusk.

Peake's first task on the formation of the Arab Legion was to show the flag in the various towns and outlying districts, to enable the Arabs to obtain visual proof that there was a disciplined and armed force in the country quite able to deal with any local disturbance. This was necessary as in towns like Kerak, Tafileh and others there were literally no police, and no attempts were made to enforce law and order. At Kerak itself a British officer was controlling affairs within the old Crusader walls of the big town, but owing to lack of police there was no security for man or beast without the keep. As the result of Peake's visit permission was obtained to enlist a further fifty men for service in this town and its immediate vicinity. There were rumours also of a very queer state of affairs at Tafileh, farther south, and at the first opportunity Peake set out with ten men to visit this place and endeavour to set up some control. A few miles south of Madeba the party were suddenly stopped by bullets dropping around them and ricocheting off the rocks with angry whines. All along the ridge in front they could see, silhouetted against the sky, heads and rifle barrels, and Peake called on his party to halt and take cover. He then sent the sergeant forward to explain to the Arabs who the party were, but the N.C.O., instead of going forward at a leisurely walk to inspire confidence, spurred his horse to a gallop and was immediately greeted with such furious fusillade that he returned even more rapidly than he had set out.

Peake then went forward at a walk and, having been allowed by the tribesmen to come within two hundred yards of the ridge, he shouted out that he was the British inspector and that, if they did not believe him, they had only to listen to his pronunciation of Arabic to realize that he was telling the truth. Immediately the whole party came rushing down to him, shaking him by the hand and apologizing profusely, and, as the sheikh explained glibly, they had mistaken Peake and his party for a Beduin *ghuzza* (raid).

"I don't think you did," said Peake. "You thought we were a party of merchants, and you were all ready there to waylay and raid them."

"By God!" said the sheikh, "I speak the truth. We are a peaceful people—not raiders—and we were there with our rifles merely to protect our homes and our animals."

Then he invited Peake to lunch in his tent, and whilst the meal was in progress a small caravan of merchants with laden mules came slowly down the track. It became quite obvious then why the Beni Hemeida tribesmen were manning the ridge in force. Peake glanced at the merchants passing below and then stared hard at the sheikh, who, in no way disconcerted, returned the meaning look, but he realized that his mendacity was wasted, and that his intentions were known to the Englishman with the disconcerting blue eyes that seemed to look right into the heart of the Arab. After this "showdown" Peake had little further trouble with the Beni Hemeida, for the Beduin has a great respect for a man who can read his thoughts.

At Tafileh Peake found a Gilbert and Sullivan state of affairs, which is

described in another chapter, but the inhabitants of the town and its surroundings were a cheerful, good-natured community, and there appeared to be no immediate necessity for police. If in the East order can be maintained without constabulary it is wiser to leave things as they are for, should a busy policeman find himself in an area where there is nothing for him to do, he feels it necessary to create something if only to justify his existence.

On Peake's return to Amman he found there was great excitement over an episode that had occurred at Es Salt. Sheikh Mithgal Pasha, one of the most influential men in the town, had taken by force the land of a neighbouring Christian, who had complained to the Government, demanding that action be taken. The *kaimakam* of Es Salt had asked Mithgal to come in and talk the matter over, but this he refused to do as he had a shrewd idea that if he did so he would be immediately placed in prison, and this surmise incidentally was quite correct.

Peake was asked by the worried officials to assist them, and he proposed to march with one hundred men to Mithgal's farm and arrest him by night before he had time to rally his tribe, the Beni Sakhr, who were very numerous and all redoubtable fighting men. The Es Salt officials, however, did not agree and a few days later Mithgal appeared in Amman. Peake at once hurried to the Government offices to obtain permission to arrest him, but instead higher authority despatched an official to tell Mithgal that, unless he went to Es Salt for a hearing of the case, he would be sent there the following morning under escort. On receipt of this order Mithgal acted as Peake had foretold, and he went straight out to his farm and rallied his whole tribe.

The following day, when Peake was absent from Amman, the Government ordered out the whole Legion to march and subdue Mithgal and his Beni Sakhr tribesmen, and when Peake returned to the town in the evening he met the force marching through the *suk* (market place). News came in at this moment that many of the smaller tribes had joined the Beni Sakhr, and from this insignificant episode a serious state of open rebellion had grown. As one hundred men could not possibly cope with the numbers massed against them, Peake ordered them to halt and bivouac while he went forward with four men to endeavour to have a personal meeting with Mithgal and to persuade him to listen to reason. During his march up to Mithgal's farm he saw evidence everywhere of the situation which had arisen, for armed tribesmen were on the move everywhere, and on several occasions he was stopped and interrogated, but allowed to proceed.

On arrival at the farm Peake found Mithgal amenable to reason, and after hours of discussions and arguments the sheikh agreed to go in with Peake the following day to Es Salt for a hearing of the case. As he explained, he knew he could trust the British Commandant to see that he was treated with justice, but that he had no confidence whatever in the integrity of the officials of Es Salt, and as Peake shared this opinion they had at least one point of view in common. On this happy note and, after an enormous meal of a sheep cooked whole, both Peake and Mithgal retired for the night.

The following morning, however, the situation was entirely changed,



for some disgruntled and glib politicians had arrived from Amman and Es Salt, and had persuaded the suspicious and rather primitive Beduin sheikh that Peake was really a Jewish agent in disguise. That he had come to the farm solely to get Mithgal put in prison, together with many of his followers and, when this had been achieved, their lands would be taken over by the Jews. As the result of this Peake was informed he was under arrest until such time as the assembled sheikhs had decided what action they would take.

During the whole morning a long discussion went on, with sheikhs and politicians addressing the meeting in turns as to what steps should be taken with regard to Peake. Some, the most vociferous, demanded he should be shot out of hand, but no sooner had this been decided upon than someone advocated restraint, and it was then agreed he should be sent to Jerusalem under escort. Then once again the more bloodthirsty obtained a hearing and immediate execution was about to be carried out, but this idea was abandoned at the last moment when one party of Arabs insisted that no blood should be spilt. Instead, they suggested, Peake should be kept as a hostage and prisoner until the Government agreed to their terms.

All these varied decisions were retailed to Peake by a thoroughly amused small boy who, after listening to the speeches at the meeting, ran across the courtyard to the prisoner with the latest news. If his face was wreathed in sunny smiles he was a harbinger of death, but if, on the other hand, he looked disappointed and sad, Peake knew that the sheikhs for the time being had decided upon a reprieve. During the course of the morning a digression in the form of a body of men marching behind an enormous flag appeared on the plain below, and these, it transpired, were deserters from the Legion come to join the rebels. On seeing them every Beduin sprang to horse and galloped off to welcome them, one man mounting on Peake's old veteran of twenty-three years of age, spurring him furiously. This so angered Peake that he broke away from his captors, and tipped the rider out of the saddle by extracting one foot from the stirrup and hoisting him upwards. After this episode, which delighted everyone except the violently decanted sheikh, the meeting assembled again, the whole of the party squatting round in a wide circle and passing cups of coffee.

By this time Peake's patience was exhausted and, shaking off his captors again, he walked into the middle of the circle, where in his loudest and most fluent Arabic he told the assembled Arabs what would happen to them and their people if he were kept prisoner and treated in this fashion. His Britannic Majesty was slow to anger, but, if any of his accredited agents should be treated with violence or lack of respect, he would send a force of men, guns and aeroplanes and disperse the Arabs, and destroy their villages and lands. When he had finished he strode back to his prison and every sheikh rose to his feet, politely making way for him to pass.

After this, though the discussion continued, it was carried on in a minor key and shortly afterwards Peake's horse was brought up ready saddled and, with every sheikh riding with him as escort, he went back to Amman. The land case at Es Salt was in due course settled satisfactorily, and at its conclusion Mithgal Pasha was compelled to apologize to Peake publicly for his behaviour. The old man, however, bore him no grudge for this,

and later on when there was a general rebellion in the north of Trans-Jordan during Peake's absence from the country on leave he was able to handle the situation on his recall again without bloodshed, owing largely to the influence and friendship of Mithgal.

The next episode in the history of the Legion is an unhappy one. Whilst Peake was in Jerusalem at a conference the people of El Kura rose against the Government, refusing to pay taxes, and the officials in Amman without reference to Peake immediately despatched the whole of the Legion under an Arab officer to subjugate the district. One of the peculiarities of the Orient is that it has never occurred to senior members of governments that there is anything unsound in the principle of "keeping a dog and barking oneself." They engage a highly-trained expert to perform a certain task and give him a free hand to start with, but no sooner has he organized his command and adopted a certain policy than invariably there ensues direct official interference that nullifies the whole scheme. The Arab Legion had only been in existence for a few months and already the Arab Cabinet, during Peake's temporary absences on patrols or missions, had assumed direct control of the force and sent it out on expeditions which were not only exceedingly unwise and perilous, but which were in direct conflict with Peake's policy for keeping the country quiet and peaceful. Throughout his whole service similar episodes took place, but the despatch of the force against the Kura people was particularly unfortunate as it led to the complete disintegration of the Legion for the time being, and Peake had to start from the beginning again.

El Kura is that area of country that lies in the extreme north-west of Trans-Jordan and consists of several square miles of very hilly and broken country intersected with sudden deep valleys, and commanded on the south by a high and precipitous range. To the west the country falls away to the valley of the Jordan at the point where it flows out of Lake Tiberias on its way to the Dead Sea. A rough and broken country is almost invariably inhabited by a tough and intractable people, and the tribesmen of El Kura were no exception to this general rule.

The Legion was under the command of an ex-Turkish officer, who was a great admirer of Napoleon and a student of his various campaigns, but on this occasion he did not follow out the precepts of this great soldier. He marched his whole force into a deep valley with insufficient patrols to guard its flanks, with the result it was ambushed and surrounded with Arab riflemen holding the heights all round. In a very short time the Legion had lost eighteen men killed, many wounded, practically all its horses, and the remainder of the force broke up and fled.

Whilst practically the whole Legion was away on this short, but disastrous, campaign Peake returned to Amman to hear that the Saltis, the people of Es Salt, were preparing to attack the village of Suweila and had already marched out in full force. The people of Suweila are Circassians, who were originally brought to the country by the Turkish Government to provide them with a source from which they could draw reliable recruits for their army and police force, and also with some half-hearted, half-completed idea of colonizing and exploiting a portion of the wasted lands of Trans-Jordan. The experiment is hardly a success as the Circassians

have never really settled down in this Arab land and, as the climate does not suit them, they are slowly dying out.

As Peake had no army with which to deal with the situation he arranged for a flight of aeroplanes and two armoured cars of the Royal Air Force stationed in Amman, to stand by in the event of trouble, but he hoped that the trouble could be overcome without the active help of the Imperial Forces. It was essential, in his view, that Trans-Jordan should manage her own internal affairs without the co-operation of military assistance from the mandatory power, and to call for help at this early stage would be a confession of failure. Moreover, if an encounter should take place, it would lead to awkward repercussions and add to the growing unpopularity of Great Britain, which the Jewish impasse on the west of Jordan was creating.

Peake himself set off ahead of the Royal Air Force in a single car, and on arrival at Suweila village he heard someone shouting to him from the roof-top. Looking up he saw an old Circassian officer of the Legion seated on the roof and wearing his full uniform, together with a large revolver and several pouches of ammunition. Considering the gravity of the situation the uniform, revolver and ammunition were called for, but the warlike appearance of the old warrior was somewhat marred by the fact that he was wearing a moustache trainer drawn across his face and hooked up behind his ears. Apparently he thought that the few moments' relaxation from the fatigues and dangers of the coming battle could not be employed to a more profitable use than by the training of his enormous moustache which he wore in an exaggerated imitation of that famous and aggressive pattern adopted by the Kaiser Wilhelm in those days. Apparently this wondrous growth, which was infinitely larger and more hirsute than anything achieved by the late Emperor of Germany, was a most important part of his military and social stock in trade, for once, when discussing the late war with Peake, he had informed him he had spent the whole period of the hostilities in the Lebanon, and the greater part of that time dallying with various ladies.

As Peake was loath to interfere with this gentleman's toilet in any way he refused the offer that was made to accompany him in the car, and went on to meet the Saltis, who were encamped some five miles outside Suweila. Here he called for the sheikhs and there was a noisy meeting where everyone present shouted at the top of his voice, and the gist of their arguments and explanation of their sudden hostility against the Circassian was therefore lost on Peake. He informed them, however, that no fighting would be allowed in any circumstances and that, if they persisted in their advance, the aeroplanes would come over and bomb them, and the armoured cars would chase them back to Es Salt with machine-guns.

After this depressing announcement the sheikhs drew off to their tent and continued their argument for another hour whilst Peake sat in his car and waited. Then at last the long and violent discussion came to an end and it was apparent some decision had been made as two or three of the leading sheikhs came up to him, but, instead of referring to the matter at issue, they asked him to join them at dinner. Peake accepted gladly because for one thing, a sheep roasted whole on a bed of boiled rice has the same warming and genial effect on a party of Arabs as has a magnum of Clicquot.

on Englishmen, and secondly, in his hurry to go out and cope with the situation, he had come away without either food or drink.

The ensuing dinner party was the merriest possible with an atmosphere of warm friendship over all, while the head sheikh of Es Salt, as a mark of esteem, handed Peake all the special titbits of the dish, such as the eye of the defunct sheep, and other portions that do not appear on a British table. As the meal drew to a close Peake noticed out of the corner of his eye that one man after another silently left the tent, and the sound of horses moving off shortly afterwards in a westerly direction indicated that the expeditionary force was breaking up and going home. When Peake awoke the following morning there were only one or two sleepy Beduin crouching over the fires, who had stayed to bid him farewell, and the war between Es Salt and Suweila was over.

On Peake's return to Amman the remnants of the force, which had been so disastrously defeated in El Kura, began to come in, but instead of reporting for duty they scattered and went straight back to their homes, having no wish to serve any longer in the armed forces of the Arab State. They had been badly shaken by the heavy losses they had sustained, but the root of the trouble was that, having been so effectually broken up by untrained tribesmen in their first encounter, the Legion was held up to contempt, and everyone in Amman was laughing at them. Moreover, the Beduin, encouraged by this success, were threatening to shoot anyone found in uniform. It was a most disconcerting and unfortunate situation, as Peake's whole object had been to raise a force from the local inhabitants, and not to engage mercenaries from neighbouring countries. He could, if he had so desired, have obtained all the recruits he wanted from the Sudan, first-class fighting men who could be relied upon to be absolutely loyal and to give a good account of themselves in any engagement, but this was not quite in accordance with either Peake's views or those of his Government. If recalcitrant tribesmen were to receive a stiff lesson from Sudanese mercenaries they would harbour a feeling of resentment against the force for all time, whereas if the severe handling they received was from their own relations they would regard it merely in the light of a perfectly natural occurrence which could be overlooked. The secret of administration is to maintain peace and security with the minimum of force, and this is impossible if the police and gendarmerie are foreigners and the inhabitants are hostile to them, regarding them as an army of occupation.

After a considerable amount of difficulty Peake managed to collect eight of his best men and persuade them to return to the Legion. They were most unwilling to do this at first, because they felt they had become the laughing-stock of Trans-Jordan and the Arab is particularly sensitive to ridicule, but Peake promised them that all infantry instruction should be carried out privately in the small yard at the back of his house, and that mounted drill and musketry should be practised some miles from the town where no one would see them. After three months or so a few more recruits were enlisted and when later, as the result of the Cairo Conference, permission was obtained to increase the force to seven hundred and fifty men, Peake had a small nucleus of non-commissioned officers with which to re-form and increase the Legion.

## CHAPTER IX

## LAWRENCE'S RETURN TO TRANS-JORDAN

"He is the chosen of the people who rejoices in the welfare of others."  
(*Arab proverb.*)

IT IS NECESSARY NOW TO LEAVE THE HISTORY OF THE EARLY DAYS OF THE Arab Legion and hark back a few months to describe some of the quick-moving events, both foreseen and unforeseen, that shaped the policy governing the formation of the State of Trans-Jordan. The country in those days might have been likened to a quite sizeable and useful piece of material, left over from a roll of cloth by the tailor's cutter when fashioning four new and fashionable suits. Such a thing, of course, would not occur in an efficient tailoring establishment, but when there are four tailors' cutters from rival firms snipping out hurriedly cut lengths to make four out-sized suits if possible, some confusion and waste is bound to occur, and misfits are inevitable.

From the conclusion of the Armistice in 1918 until the year 1920, British, Australian or Indian troops were garrisoning Trans-Jordan, which was then a portion of the Arab State that had its seat of government in Damascus, but at the same time it was also regarded as a part of OETA—Occupied Enemy's Territory Administration. Its southern boundary then ran in a straight line from west to east just north of the village and old Crusader castle of Shobek, and the country south of this, namely, the Maan area which included Akaba, belonged to the Hedjaz Kingdom, ruled by King Hussein though his son, Feisal of Damascus, claimed it.

In 1920, as the result of the Peace of Versailles and San Remo Conference, France was appointed as mandatory power in Syria and immediately requested that British troops should be withdrawn from that territory. The department of the War Office which dealt with the request, being vague as to its geography, not only withdrew troops from Syria, but also from Trans-Jordan, leaving the country with neither a controlling government nor any army and police with which to maintain order. It was at this period that eight small independent States were formed by local bodies, and some of these were considerably smaller than the average British county. As the first thing an ostensibly independent, but actually quite dependent, state does on obtaining its so-called freedom is to take steps to restrict that freedom by erecting a ridiculous custom barrier around it and enlisting a horde of officials to maintain that barrier, and hang up trade, it is lucky this absurd state of affairs existed only until September, 1920, when Sir Herbert Samuel, High Commissioner of Palestine, went over to Trans-Jordan to see things for himself.

Sir Herbert held a big *darbar* at Es Salt, which was attended by all the sheikhs of the Beduin tribes and mayors and notables of the villages, and announced that as Trans-Jordan was now a British Mandate some form of government of the whole State must be initiated. The announcement



THE WALLS OF THE OLD CRUSADER TOWN OF KERAK



PEAKE'S CAR BEING DRAWN ACROSS THE FLOODED RIVER ZERKA ON THE WAY TO THE KURA

gave pleasure and satisfaction to the villagers and townsfolk, who were beginning to suffer severely from Beduin raids, but was not so popular with the nomads, who were intelligent enough to grasp that the delightful days of no public security were now over.

It is interesting to remember in connection with this historic meeting that, when complete agreement had been arrived at, the sheikhs of the town of Kerak brought forward two Palestinians who had been living with them for some months. They had been leaders of the revolt in Jerusalem against the British Government on Easter Day, 1920, and on suppression of the rising had fled to Trans-Jordan to escape arrest and imprisonment. As they were still wanted by the police of Palestine they were exiles from their own country, to which they wished to return. The sheikhs of Kerak put it to Sir Herbert that as they had agreed willingly to all his proposals would he, on his part, grant them a favour, and give a free pardon to these men. Sir Herbert said he would inquire into their cases on his return to Jerusalem, and if it was in any way possible he would agree to the request. Later, he announced that, if the two men swore they would never interfere in politics or take part in sedition again, they would be allowed to return to Palestine free men. The two exiles were Aref Bey el Aref and Haj Amin el Husseini, later the Mufti of Jerusalem and more recently—having been discharged from that post—the ex-Mufti. Aref Bey el Aref entered the service of the Palestine Government, and for many years worked for the country loyally and energetically as *kaimakam* at Beer-sheba. Haj Amin el Husseini, as everyone knows, broke his oath flagrantly and is, at the time of writing, in the capital of the country which one connects naturally with broken promises and torn-up treaties; and one must conclude he feels quite at home there.

Immediately after the *darbar* at Es Salt, Sir Herbert Samuel appointed two or three British officers to act in an administrative capacity in Trans-Jordan, and one of these was Peake, charged primarily with the formation of a police force and the maintenance of public security, and another was Major the Hon. F. R. Somerset, now Lord Raglan, who was specially detailed to administer the northern portion of the country around Ajlun. It is interesting to remember that when Major Somerset crossed the Jordan from Palestine to take over his new post he was met by a deputation of sheikhs at the river, who insisted he should sign an undertaking that the Zionist policy in Palestine should not be introduced into Trans-Jordan. This is proof that even in those very early days of the Mandate there was great antipathy on the part of the Arabs in Trans-Jordan to any form of Jewish penetration into their country, and that the feeling is not of more or less recent origin as is suggested sometimes.

The new form of administration in Trans-Jordan was hampered from the beginning owing to the state of affairs existing farther north in Syria, where the French, whose ideas of a Mandate differed considerably from our own, had discharged all the recently-appointed Arab officials and were governing the country as if it were a colony. These Arab officials came into Trans-Jordan seeking posts in the Amman Government, and though, intellectually and in every way, they were suited to fill positions of importance, they were unfortunately imbued with one idea and one idea only,



and that was raising a force of Arabs in the country with a view to marching against the French in Syria.

Looking back on those times of makeshift and day-to-day policies it is easy to envisage matters from the point of view of the harassed British Government, faced with difficult post-war problems in almost every corner of the world. In Palestine there was considerable unrest due to the Zionist policy with which the country was saddled; in Irak, late Mesopotamia, the Arabs had already showed signs of dissatisfaction, which had adopted a violent form; in Central Arabia, Ibn Saud with ideas of invasion and expansion was beginning to move out from Jauf and Riyadh; and King Hussein in the Hedjaz was scheming for one Arab kingdom in Arabia, although neither Ibn Saud, the local government of Irak, nor his own son, Feisal, saw eye to eye with him.

Early in 1921 the Emir Abdulla, son of King Hussein of the Hedjaz, came to Maan from Mecca by the derelict railway, which had not been functioning since 1918. No coal was available, and the engine was stoked the whole of the five hundred mile journey by sawing up the poles of the disused telegraph line. The various cuts in the line, made by Lawrence and Peake during the war, were repaired roughly by a small breakdown gang which accompanied the party, and eventually the train wheezed and bumped its way into Maan.

Abdulla, who was accompanied by the Sherif Ali Ibn Hussein, had come north, so bazaar rumour said, under orders from his father to raise a force of Arabs in Trans-Jordan for operations against the French in Syria, and all the ex-Syrian officials and politicians flocked to Maan to meet him. Abdulla, however, had arrived without a force, or money to raise one, and he therefore remained at Maan, which at that time was outside Trans-Jordan territory, whilst the Sherif Ali went on to Amman, where his presence was an embarrassment, and made an already awkward situation even more difficult. The French were quite unable to appreciate the British Government's position and were openly accusing the British officials in Trans-Jordan of rendering active help to the Syrian rebels, whereas in fact they were doing their utmost to prevent anything in this nature, but with the whole of the Trans-Jordan Government holding opposite views their efforts were mostly sterile.

In March, 1921, Mr. Winston Churchill, the Colonial Secretary, went out to Egypt to hold the Cairo Conference, which was attended by Sir Percy Cox, High Commissioner of Irak, Sir Herbert Samuel, of Palestine, and a great number of officers and officials who were in a position to give advice and evidence about the various countries in that troublous part of the world which had been christened recently the Middle East. Previously it had been known as the Near East, but as the Near East proper, with the ever-recurring Dardanelles problem and the conflicting views of Turkey and the Balkan States, had more troubles than one section of the world could conveniently carry, it was decided to lighten its burden by dividing it into two portions. This device in no way decreased the number of awkward problems, but it enabled them to be classified more easily.

Among those who attended this conference were Peake and Major the Hon. F. R. Somerset, representing Trans-Jordan, while T. E. Lawrence

was also present in his new capacity as Arab adviser to the Colonial Office. On the third day of the meeting the problems on the agenda reached the case of Trans-Jordan, and Peake had just prepared his papers to give his account of the situation in the country when a message was brought in a telegram addressed to him. It came from the Government offices in Trans-Jordan and said briefly: "The Emir Abdulla entered Amman to-day."

As Peake explained, this event had altered the situation entirely, for until he knew what were the Emir's actual intentions it was impossible to forecast the course events would take, but rumour had it that Abdulla had come north with only one object in view—to raise the tribesmen of Trans-Jordan against the French. Mr. Churchill, with his ability to make quick and correct decisions, decided to meet the Emir Abdulla personally and to endeavour to arrive at some workable policy. It had not occurred to the British Government previously that one of the Hashimite family, a son of King Hussein, should act as a ruler in Trans-Jordan, but his presence in the country as prince of a ruling house was now a *fait accompli*, and it was advisable to make the best of a situation that might prove difficult. It is interesting in this connection, when looking back on Trans-Jordan's successful past and hopeful future, to realize that the ruler of the State came into the country uninvited, and that this fortuitous circumstance, once an embarrassment, has proved to be one of the happiest events in the post-war history of the country.

T. E. Lawrence was much in favour of the personal meeting between Churchill and the Emir, for he knew Abdulla well and with his natural gift for reading characters Lawrence had a very shrewd idea that the coming talk would have the happiest results, for the personalities of Churchill and Abdulla are very similar. They are both endowed with personal charm and what might be described as a "hail fellow well met" manner; both have a very shrewd wit and an unfailing gift of seeing the humorous side of things.

Lawrence's appreciation of the situation was correct, for Mr. Churchill and the Emir Abdulla, despite the difficulty of the language question, found they had much in common, and a provisional agreement was made by which Abdulla was recognized by the British Government as ruler of Trans-Jordan, provided he undertook to do his utmost to check hostile movements in that country against the French. In return for this Great Britain agreed to pay a Grant-in-Aid to Trans-Jordan of £180,000—made up of £30,000 to be returned to the Palestine Government for the expenses incurred during the previous six months, £30,000 in six monthly instalments to His Highness' private purse, and £120,000 for the raising of an adequate police force and the payment of officials.

In his draft preface to *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*, which was not published in the book, Lawrence wrote of the Cairo Conference and Mr. Churchill's agreement with the Emir Abdulla:

"He [Mr. Churchill] set honesty before expediency in order to fulfil our promises in the letter and in the spirit. He executed the whole of the McMahon undertaking for Palestine, for Trans-Jordan, and for Arabia. In Mesopotamia he went far beyond its provisions, giving the

Arabs more, and reserving for us much less, than Sir Henry McMahon thought fit.

"In the affairs of French Syria he was not able to interfere. . . . I do not wish to publish secret documents nor to make long explanations, but must put on record my convictions that England is out of the Arab affair with clean hands."

In *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* the account of the Cairo Conference is written somewhat differently, but the gist of the summing up is much the same :

" . . . Mr. Winston Churchill was entrusted by our harassed Cabinet with the settlement of the Middle East : and in a few weeks, at his conference in Cairo, he made straight all the tangle, finding solutions fulfilling (I think) our promises in letter and spirit (where humanly possible) without sacrificing any interests of our Empire or any interest of the people concerned. So we were quit of the war-time Eastern adventure, with clean hands, but three years too late to earn the gratitude which peoples, if not States, can pay."

There is no intention here to re-open the vexed question of our commitments to the Arab race, but as this country has been accused so often of dishonesty and double-dealing in the matter, it is consoling to read this considered opinion of the man who led the Arab Revolt and who was in all things pro-Arab, understanding their side of the question, but realizing also the impossibility of granting all their demands.

There is one rather amusing episode in connection with Mr. Churchill's visit to Jerusalem which is worth recounting. On his way up by train from Kantara Mr. Churchill expressed a desire to see the battlefield of Gaza, where Sir Archibald Murray had fought two inconclusive engagements and Lord Allenby had won a decisive victory, which ended with the capture of Jerusalem itself. The train was stopped at Gaza, but as the station is some distance from the battlefield, the whole party—a very large one with its various representatives and officials, including some wives—had to walk up the sandy lane leading from the station to the town.

The inhabitants of Gaza, a somewhat turbulent community in ordinary times, were most hostile to the Zionist policy in Palestine, although so far it had not affected them in the slightest degree, for there were no Jewish immigrants or settlers at that time in any part of this old Philistine area. The Gazawis, like their relations in Nablus, farther north, are always grateful for an excuse for a demonstration, and so they lined the road as the members of the Cairo Conference walked by, shouting hostile remarks.

Their very pugnacious attitude was quite lost on one lady of the party, for she remarked to Mr. Churchill : "Isn't it delightful to be met by such an enthusiastic gathering and to have such a warm welcome as this with gratitude to us on every smiling face?"

Mr. Churchill, however, had a very shrewd idea that the smiles of welcome on the faces of the mob were in reality grins of rage and he turned to Lawrence, who was walking just behind.

"I say, Lawrence," he asked, "are these people dangerous? They don't seem too pleased to see us. What are they shouting?"

Lawrence said he did not think they were actually dangerous, but the words they were shouting were not exactly expressions of welcome as, being translated, they were : "Down with the British and down with the Jewish policy !"

In October, 1921, T. E. Lawrence was again sent out to Trans-Jordan by the Colonial Office to study the situation in the country and advise on the general policy to be adopted. He stayed for about three months and as there was no accommodation available in Amman he lived with Peake, who had very comfortable quarters in a stone-built house erected on the site of a Byzantine church, the pillars of the nave standing in various stages of disintegration in the garden. Among the many European additions Peake made to this house were fireplaces in the sitting-rooms—a fireplace being regarded as quite unnecessary by the Arabs as, if the night is cold, a brazier of charcoal is placed under the table which, if it has the advantage of keeping the feet warm, has the disadvantage of making the head ache. The Amman mason who undertook this work built one chimney to accommodate two fireplaces in two adjoining rooms, which is the usual method employed in England, but he neglected to provide two separate flues, so that the fireplaces were actually connected about three feet above the floor level. The first to discover this faulty construction was Peake's cat, a very wild and nervous descendant of the small-headed variety which the Pharaohs used to mummify, and when Lawrence entered the room on arrival he was horrified to see the household cat take a wild leap from the hearth-rug into the heart of a blazing fire, and disappear. A moment later Peake came in through the door with the same cat at his heels, and Lawrence realized then he was back again in the Orient where the unaccountable happens always.

Lawrence was not an office man and he was no believer in the system of obtaining his information from files, returns and reports. He insisted upon seeing things for himself, and so he and Peake toured all over the country on camels or by car, deciding on the various police posts that would be essential, and considering also the active defence of the State against severe raids by Central Arabian Beduin, who were becoming active as one of the aftermaths of war. He was the first to realize that air control, backed by a few armoured cars, would be infinitely cheaper and more effective than the old-fashioned Army of Occupation. The attractive side of Lawrence was his ability to grasp a situation with a clarity, ease and sound common sense, which is not a marked characteristic of the average Whitehall official ; but then Lawrence was not an average Whitehall official. Although during the Revolt he had lived and fought with the Beduin nomad and had seen little of the villager, he agreed entirely with Peake's point of view that the future of the small State depended upon the cultivator, who must be protected from his desert neighbour.

Lawrence and Peake visited together their old haunts along the Hedjaz railway, which four years previously they had mined and destroyed so effectually, but now they regarded their demolitions from the totally different point of view of administrators of the State they had captured, and wished they had not been so thorough in their wrecking campaign. The car in which they made most of their inspections was the old Model T two-gear-

Ford, which had afforded convincing proof that it was the only car of those days that would stand up to rough desert travel. It was known in the Army as the Tin Lizzie, and its ability to withstand the shocks of the broken tracks and awkward boulders was due partly to its very high clearance and to its system of transverse springing. Moreover, it was a car that suited the Oriental driver, as it would put up with any treatment, and would continue to run satisfactorily when something like twenty-five per cent of its essential parts were roughly contrived makeshifts, fashioned from such things as hairpins, lengths of telegraph wire, portions of iron railway sleepers and tyre levers.

On one occasion when Peake and Lawrence were out in the Tafleh area the car ran out of lubricating oil, owing to an overheated engine. Peake sent off a Beduin by camel to buy any oil he could obtain from the village of Tafleh, and he returned some hours later with a tin of oil made from the seed of the sunflower. The car ran most satisfactorily on this unusual lubricant, but when the engine became warmed up the stench from the burning oil was more than either Lawrence or Peake could stand, and at the first Beduin encampment they borrowed riding camels for the remainder of the journey. The Arab chauffeur, however, was quite unaffected by the stink, and brought the car in the following day none the worse for its long run on a vegetable oil.

After obtaining first-hand knowledge of the country and the general situation, Lawrence would then interview the Emir and his advisers, outlining to them the general policy to be observed. He spent, however, very little time in the British Resident's office, for, as he said to Peake, an office was an evil to which we as a race are addicted, and the tendency is for the official to spend his time at his desk reading written reports instead of seeing things for himself.

"If you must have an office," said Lawrence, "put clerks in it only and keep the officials outside."

Then he packed up the typewriter and put it away, and, collecting a number of files which he considered unnecessary, he shoved them into the waste-paper basket. These sentiments were no doubt good, but his method of enforcing them somewhat drastic, as among the papers destroyed were several passports awaiting endorsement, and there was considerable trouble when the owners came to collect them.

Lawrence was an amusing guest to entertain, but he was a man of moods; on some evenings he would be the best of company with most entertaining stories of humorous episodes which had occurred during the various meetings of the Allied representatives before Versailles; on others, he would be depressed, incommunicative and obviously weighed down by the cares of fashioning a post-war world in the Middle East. On occasions he would disappear without notice and be absent for three or four days, returning with half a dozen Arab friends. Peake's house was too small for these parties and to accommodate the guests he obtained a large Beduin goats'-hair tent, which he fitted up with blankets and cushions for Lawrence's Arab cronies, who stayed usually for some days. These sudden influxes of guests requiring food and plenty of it are no trial at all in Arab lands, as the household staff, far from resenting the situation, are delighted and

flattered if called upon suddenly to provide dinner for twelve people when they have been preparing for two. It has the effect of putting them on their mettle and showing what they can do at short notice. The meals served consisted usually of a sheep or lamb roasted whole or, if the party were a small one, a turkey resting on a mound of boiled rice, flavoured with saffron and containing pistachio nuts and raisins ; and into this the party would put their hands, pulling out chunks of meat and catching up handfuls of rice. From the general lay-out of Lawrence's cottage at Clouds' Hill, by Bovington, in Dorset, where only an open fireplace existed for cooking, it would seem that Lawrence intended to feed in England on retirement on much the same lines as at those cheery dinner-parties in the Arabian deserts.

The Lawrence of the Arab Revolt and the Lawrence of the Colonial Office were not quite the same man, for the first was essentially one of great personality, ready to make lightning decisions and to act on them, relying entirely on his own judgments and prepared to take the responsibility for them ; whilst the second, in his new rôle as a civil servant, felt stultified and unable to use effectually the qualities that had made him great. One obtained the impression, too, that he was a disappointed man—the ideals for which he had fought and schemed had not materialized on the lines he had expected, and were like Dead Sea fruit. Though it is the fashion now to attribute this disappointment entirely to the British Government and the misunderstandings due to the Balfour Declaration, McMahon letters and Sykes-Picot Treaty, there is evidence also that in his opinion the Arabs themselves were partly responsible. During his campaign he had worked and fought with Arabs who were men of action, willing to die for the cause, but now he found that the control of the various States in many cases was in the hands of a different type altogether—men who had been content to remain in the background while the campaign was in progress, but who were now coming forward as leaders of the newly-created Governments. Owing to this there were private jealousies, old feuds and tribal hatreds stultifying the cause which was so dear to him and making an intricate situation more difficult of settlement.

As the result of his visit to Trans-Jordan, besides advising on the general situation, particularly with regard to Syria, he wrote the following report to the Colonial Office on the Arab Legion :

"The Reserve Force under Zaim (Major) Peake Bey now numbers five hundred odd. The tone and condition of the unit is very promising. I think internally it is as well as possible, and it reflects great credit on Zaim Peake Bey that it is so.

"Externally things are less satisfactory. At first people in Trans-Jordan said we were making an army to smash them for our own purposes. Then as time went on they said we were purposely creating an inefficient force to give us an excuse for sending British troops across. The reason for this has been the delay in supplying equipment and materials. Uniforms, saddles, machine-guns, rifles have all been held up. Peake cannot show his men in public till they are reasonably smart and till they have rifles, for in Trans-Jordan every man of military

age carries a rifle as a mark of self-respect, and Peake's so-called Military Force is the only unarmed body of men in the country. When this is set right public suspicion will go to rest."

In this report Lawrence translates the Arab rank of *zaim* as major, but actually it is something higher and brigadier is perhaps nearer the mark. Lawrence never worried his head much about ranks, and was always rather contemptuous of them. During his early army days when he was at the Arab Bureau in Cairo he used to walk about with lieutenant's stars on one shoulder and captain's on the other. Peake started his service in Trans-Jordan as a brigadier, was promoted to *lewa*, or major-general, after the successful operations against the El Kura tribes, and became a *ferik*, or full general with the title of Pasha, when the Maan vilayet was added to Trans-Jordan, thus doubling the size of the State.

Many years later, when a friend of Lawrence's, Flight-Lieutenant W. M. Hurley of the Royal Air Force, was sent to the Amman station Lawrence wrote to him as follows :

"Peake is a very good fellow. He has stuck splendidly to three or four thankless jobs and made a deal out of them. A hot, impatient soul, too !"

This, by the way, expresses in a very few concise words the personality of Peake, and "a very good fellow" is the correct summing up to which everyone, except possibly the inefficient and the ineffectual, would subscribe. It describes the feelings which all his British confrères entertained for him ; it is the correct English translation of the Arabic *rajil tiyyib*, which was the considered opinion of every Arab in the country he administered from the Emir himself to the wildest of the desert Beduin ; and it represents in a short sentence the admiration, respect and loyalty which was a marked feature of the bearing of the Arab Legionaries, officers and men under his command.

"He has stuck splendidly to three or four thankless jobs, and made a deal out of them," describes with Lawrence brevity Peake's early struggles in Trans-Jordan when forming the Arab Legion, and when he had nothing but his personality and strength of purpose with which to carry on. "A hot, impatient soul, too," and but for this heat and impatience he would never have fought his way through British official inertia and Oriental obstruction and lethargy to create a force which stands in a class by itself for discipline and efficiency in the Middle East, and has proved its value in the present war. His hot impatience also enabled him to get to the root of matters at once, to right old wrongs, to be firm and ruthless here and lenient there, and in his dual capacity as a civil official, as well as General Officer commanding troops, to evolve an administration which has turned the most lawless part of Arabia into the most prosperous and peaceful of all the vast peninsula.

The writer has varied pleasant memories of him—arriving unexpectedly by fast-trotting camel at some isolated desert post, coming in with a column of white dust in his touring car, or materializing out of the blue in his private aeroplane. Always with the point at issue clear-cut and concise in his mind,

always with a workable solution ready to hand, but prepared always to listen to reason and hear the other side. Once when dining at a party in Cairo I overheard a remark I was not supposed to hear. It was to the effect that "Peake and Jarvis are a couple of twelfth-century Arab swashbucklers," and on the next occasion when Peake and I were together I repeated it. He, however, did not take offence.

"Swashbucklers," he said thoughtfully; "well, I'm not certain it isn't true. We have had to be swashbucklers—the part was forced on us!"

## CHAPTER X

## MUTINIES AND REVOLTS

"It may be a fire to-day; on the morrow it will be ashes." (*Arab proverb.*)

IN THE EARLY AUTUMN OF 1921, AS A RESULT OF THE DECISIONS ARRIVED AT during the Cairo Conference, Peake was ordered to increase the Arab Legion, then almost non-existent as the aftermath of the Kura disaster, to about seven hundred and fifty men, and this was far from easy as hostility to the force was still maintained throughout the country. As his policy was to obtain most of his recruits from the settled tribesmen and cultivators, the nomads realized that their power would be greatly curtailed if the Legion became strong and efficient, and every device was employed to prevent the enlistment of young men, would-be recruits being threatened with murder. Propaganda was also spread that the institution of the new force meant that the British Government were going to conscript the Arabs for their army, a step which the Turks had never dared to take. There was opposition and intrigue also from higher up, because the newly-appointed Emir had entrusted Peake with the formation and command of the Legion, and this incensed the senior Syrian officials of the Government, who resented this important post being given to a foreigner. With the encouragement they obtained from these officials, the powerful sheikhs of the country were able to exert their influence to such an extent that no recruits could be obtained.

When it became apparent that Peake must get some sort of force together at once or have to face an open rebellion with no means of suppressing it, he went over to Palestine, where he found a large number of men and some officers—many of them Egyptian and Sudanese—who had been discharged from the army at the conclusion of the war, and who had remained in the country in the hopes of finding employment. As they had failed to find work of any kind they were eager to join the Legion, and with the assistance of Palestine police officers Peake succeeded in enlisting some two hundred and fifty men of various nationalities—Egyptians, Sudanese and Palestinians, including a large contingent from Nablus, who did not prove very satisfactory. He bought uniforms from the British Army disposal boards, obtained a supply of German rifles that had been picked up



on the various battlefields, and, hiring lorries, he brought his scratch force into Amman in a long convoy.

The camp for this new force, however, had been pitched some two miles outside Amman, Peake having decided that it would be wise to station them some distance away from the town itself so that their general inefficiency and lack of military training would not become apparent to the residents in the capital. Here, after a tour through the streets of Amman to "show the flag," the new army "debussed" in the military parlance of to-day. The sudden arrival of this large body of armed and uniformed men, out of the blue as it were, had a most salutary effect on the sedition-mongers of Trans-Jordan, who were congratulating themselves that they had effectually blocked Peake's efforts to form an army. When the people of Trans-Jordan grasped the fact that, if they did not join the Arab Legion to maintain order in their own country, foreigners would be brought in to control them, the antagonism to the force died down, and recruits of a very fine type came in from all parts of the State to bring the Legion up to its proper complement. After this there was no longer any question of touring the country rounding up unwilling recruits, for Peake's difficulties in future lay in selecting from the many and eager applicants those most suited physically and intellectually for service in the Legion, and unfortunately in the East these two essential qualifications are seldom found in company because education in some mysterious fashion has a deteriorating effect on physique.

It became apparent very soon that the local product was in every way more suitable than the scratch contingent of foreigners that Peake had enlisted in Palestine, who were for the most part slovenly and insubordinate and not of the type that makes a good soldier. He was exercised in his mind as to how he should rid himself of their services and, having engaged them when his need for men was great, he did not care to discharge them as inefficient soldiers because more suitable recruits were plentiful. The Nablusis from Palestine, who numbered about forty, were particularly unsatisfactory, but obligingly they solved the difficulty of their discharge by playing into Peake's hands. One of their number for some misdemeanour had been awarded seven days' imprisonment, and his confinement happened to coincide with the end of the fast of Ramadan. Ramadan is followed by the great Mahommedan festival of Bairam, which more or less takes the place of our Christmas Day, and it is an old custom in the East for a certain number of prisoners to be released on the eve of the holiday as a gesture of good will and the festive spirit, but needless to say only a very small proportion of particularly harmless convicts obtain this amnesty, and the rule is not general.

The Nablusis, who were the most insubordinate of an inefficient lot, got it into their heads that their comrade should be released, and shortly after the cannon had been fired to signal the sighting of the new moon of Bairam and the end of the month's fast, Peake, who was just going to sit down to dinner in his house, heard the noise of shouting and the tramping of feet. He went down the garden and in the road below were the whole of the Nablusi contingent, carrying their rifles and angrily demanding that their comrade be released for Bairam. They did not make the request

politely, nor did it occur to them to treat their commanding officer with any respect : they insisted that their demand be acceded to without delay.

Peake agreed at once to their request, and when they insisted he should put it in writing, wrote out a note to the officer commanding the camp asking him to release the Nablusi prisoner at once. With shouts of derision the mutineers marched off on their way back to camp, and Peake went at once to the telephone and ordered the officer in charge of the camp to fall in every available man and hold them in readiness to deal with the Nablusi, who would be arriving there in about forty minutes. When the triumphant Nablus men entered the cantonment they were immediately surrounded and disarmed, their uniforms removed and their civilian garments produced, and the following morning a lorry took them back to their home across the Jordan. Peake had carried out his promise to the letter, for not only was the prisoner released to enjoy his Bairam among his own people in his home town, but he released also from the service all the detained man's comrades to enable them to make the party a thoroughly convivial one.

The arming of the Legion was one of Peake's difficulties, for although the force was raised at the instigation of the British Government, who paid for it by means of the Grant-in-Aid, they offered no assistance towards arming and equipping it. In lieu of British arms he was compelled to issue them with German rifles and machine-guns obtained from the old arms dumps formed after the Turkish defeat, and despite repeated requests for a new supply during the next ten years he was compelled to put up with the out-of-date weapons, until one day an obliging Royal Air Force small arms expert condemned the whole lot as not only useless, but positively dangerous. After this he received a supply of new British rifles, though how our military authorities managed to get rid of the odd three million small arms they had on their hands at the end of the last war must always remain a mystery.

When the mounted squadrons were formed they were officered mostly from ex-Turkish cavalry officers, who of course demanded swords and would not be satisfied until they had them. Swords were even more difficult to obtain than rifles, and actually, as the so-called cavalry squadrons were going to be in reality mounted infantry, Peake was not particularly keen on the sword idea and the maintenance of the so-called cavalry spirit. To quote his own words : "I have never believed in the *arme blanche* since the invention of the machine-gun. I have always hated to see cavalry swaggering about with swords, counting their men by sabres instead of rifles, and all that sort of thing. It merely demonstrated the impossibility of any old regular soldier absorbing new ideas."

Apparently it is not only the British that suffer from the cavalry craze and the horse fetish, and it is interesting to hear that it survived among Turkish officers serving in an Arab force, where the possibility of employing shock tactics could never arise. The horse fetish, however, is a belief that dies extremely hard, and even to-day, when Panzer divisions and bus-borne infantry have demonstrated so effectually that the day of the cavalry is over, we refuse steadfastly to recognize this blasphemy and fight hard for the old faith. During the recent Syrian campaign a small detachment of Australians obtained some horses and fought for a time as mounted

infantry. Immediately every newspaper in the land came forth with inspired head-lines and it was taken for granted that Syria was already won for us, for were not cavalry being used? The old faith manifests itself even in the Home Guard, and if one of the many thousand units in the country mounts a section of its men on forest or moorland ponies, photographs of the tiny detachment appear in every illustrated journal, inspired and thrilling accounts are written on their exploits, and that week every Briton sleeps soundly in his bed for he knows his country is safe and invasion impossible—the Home Guard are forming cavalry units to deal with the enemy! The horse fetish would be extremely funny if it were not so very dangerous, and had not caused so much harm in the past—particularly during the last wasted fifteen years.

Peake visited the disposal boards in Palestine in search of swords, but drew blank, and he then went to Cairo. Here he found one hundred and fifty tulwars, or Indian cavalry swords of the scimitar type, and obtained these at a very low price. These, however, were sufficient only for one squadron, and the Cairo disposal board had nothing else to offer. Then he heard there were swords for sale in the Egyptian Army, and at their Ordnance Depot at the Citadel he found one hundred and fifty sabres of the French type, which were being removed from the walls of one of the arsenal rooms. He got this job lot at five shillings a weapon, and discovered later they were part of the equipment of Napoleon's ill-fated army which had come to Egypt some thirty thousand strong in 1798, and had left it in 1801 as prisoners of war.

Whilst Peake was engaged in his work of forming a disciplined force from a people who had never heard of the word discipline, the Emir Abdulla was faced with the more difficult task of endeavouring to carry out his undertaking to prevent his country being used as both a refuge and assembly place for Arab discontents, who were maintaining a guerrilla warfare against the French all along the Syrian border. The Emir was doing his best to control matters, but, as practically every member of his government hailed from either Syria or the Damascus region and had recently been expelled from their country by the French, their sympathies were openly with the rebels, and there is no doubt that not only was every wanted man welcomed to the country, but active assistance was given covertly to the bands of rebels.

About this time a man called Ibrahim Hanano arrived in Amman, and it appeared later that he had been fighting against the French at the head of a party of Arabs and was a well-known leader of the Arab party. Ibrahim Hanano wished to go to Egypt, no doubt to meet Arab sympathizers there and raise funds, and the Trans-Jordan Government wrote to the Chief British Resident in Amman asking him to facilitate this man's journey in every way. The post of Chief British Resident was one created by Sir Herbert Samuel with the idea of maintaining some form of control in the Arab Government of Trans-Jordan, and the position of this official was merely that of an adviser with no executive power. In the early days of Trans-Jordan the post was filled by Mr. Abramson of the Palestine Government, who was at the same time President of the Land Commission in that country, which meant that he had little time to spare for the control of

Trans-Jordan. Later Mr. St. John Philby, the well-known Arab expert and writer, was appointed, and for the greater part of Peake's service the post was held by Sir Henry Cox. Neither Peake nor Mr. Abramson had ever heard of Ibrahim Hanano, and when the apparently harmless request was made that the British Resident should assist the gentleman on his journey to Egypt, a letter was written to the Chief Secretary in Jerusalem asking him to do what he could in the matter as Ibrahim Hanano was a *persona grata* with the Trans-Jordan Cabinet. Armed with this letter Hanano went to Jerusalem, had an interview with the Chief Secretary, and went to a hotel for the night. If Ibrahim Hanano was unknown to the British officials in Trans-Jordan, he was being eagerly sought after in Palestine, for the Commandant of Police there had received a demand from the French for his arrest and extradition. Immediately the news came through that the much wanted refugee was in Jerusalem a party of police went to the hotel and arrested him.

The following day in Amman, Peake, in ignorance of all this, was walking through the market-place when he was suddenly seized by about twenty armed men who, holding his arms behind him, marched him down the street. Then on all sides excited Arabs appeared with rifles which they pointed at Peake, whilst others drew their long curved knives, drawing them across their throats to indicate the fate that awaited him. Every man in the mob was in a state of murderous excitement, and they were yelling: "Bring back Ibrahim Hanano, or we will kill you."

It was one of those occasions which occur sooner or later in the lives of most solitary British administrators among the Arab people, when excited mobs incensed by some wrong, real or imagined, murder their best friend in a moment of heat because he happens to be the only member of the British race in view at the moment. Probably not one of the assassins have at the outset any desire to kill, but inflamed by the yelling of the crowd some man's finger tightens on a trigger inadvertently and the sound of the shot is the signal for every man to fire. In this way Colonel Leachman died in Irak among the people who loved and respected him, so was Colonel Snow murdered by his friends the Aulad Ali in the Libyan Desert, Captain Fergusson of the Sudan Service, and more recently a British consul in Irak by a mob who had been told by sedition mongers that the King's fatal motor-car accident had been arranged by English machinations.

Peake was hustled down the street with the crowd growing in numbers and, on arrival at the small bridge that crosses the stream by the Roman theatre, he saw an enormous crowd of some fifteen hundred excited Arabs who were endeavouring to break into the Prime Minister's office. As Peake was dragged forward the shouting ceased suddenly and the whole crowd gathered round as he was forced into an open space. Then the mob closed in on him again ominously and rifles were pointed at him from every side, whilst the shouts for the release of Ibrahim Hanano broke out again.

At any moment the fatal shot might occur that would be the signal for a volley, but suddenly the mob broke in one place and a mounted officer of the Legion, Fuad Sleem, spurred his way through the crowd and stopped his horse in front of Peake. He drew his revolver, shouting that he would shoot the first man who advanced, but the excited Arabs rushed forward

with yells of rage. Fuad Sleem fired, the leading man dropped, and in a moment the whole of the excited mob were in full flight, streaming over the bridge and up the side streets to avoid the bullets from the remaining five cartridges. There is no question that Peake owed his life to the very gallant action of the officer, who was fully aware that in the excited state of the mob his own life was forfeit as well as Peake's if his first shot had not killed a rioter and created a panic. Fuad Sleem, incidentally, though a personal friend of Peake's, was fanatical in his hatred of the French, and his sympathies at the time must have been whole-heartedly with the mob in their demands for the release of Ibrahim Hanano, who in their eyes had been arrested by a trick and gross treachery; though in reality it had been due entirely to the double-dealing of the Trans-Jordan Government in taking advantage of the British Resident's ignorance of the wanted man's identity. Fuad Sleem served in the Legion with Peake for another two years and then, joining the rebels in Syria, he was killed in 1926 fighting against the French.

The Ibrahim Hanano episode had immediate repercussions in the Arab Legion, for as the result of the inquiry into the rising two of the officers were found to be implicated in fomenting the crowd and were immediately discharged. Owing to the weakness of the Government, and interference from above, Peake's hands were tied and they were not punished. As the result of this leniency the Saltis, recruits from the Es Salt area, mutinied with the idea of insisting on the reinstatement of one of the officers, who was also a native of Es Salt. Peake was in his office one morning when a message was brought to him that the Salti contingent were marching into the town, firing off their rifles, and generally in a most dangerous mood.

Peake at once ordered two machine-gun detachments to assemble at the corner of a road by the station and, having seen them under cover, he rode out alone to meet the party. They greeted him with shouts of rage and a volley of shots fired in the air. Peake held up his hand and called upon them to halt, but this had the effect of increasing the volume of fire, and some of the bullets were not aimed at the air. He then made a signal for the machine-gunners to come out into the road and galloped away to clear the field of fire. This was the signal for yells of derision, and the mutineers rushed on to find themselves suddenly facing the muzzles of two machine-guns. Then Peake rode out again, and this time his order was to "ground arms," which was carried out with military precision. Then the crews of the machine-gunners came forward, collected the rifles and ammunition, and sixty very frightened mutineers were marched into headquarters to emerge later as sixty unemployed civilians.

It was shortly after this that Peake had his first and only disagreement with the Emir Abdulla. Throughout the whole of their eighteen years together a warm friendship and mutual admiration existed between the Arab ruler and his English Commander-in-Chief, and practically every day when he was in Amman Peake would call on the Emir to drink a cup of bitter Arab coffee and discuss some problem, or, if no problem existed—a rare occurrence—to chat on the various topics of the day. The writer of this book, on every occasion when he was in Amman with Peake, was taken as a matter of course to call on the Emir, and the affection and esteem

that the Prince had for his English adviser was very obvious to the observer. This friendship was of the greatest value to Peake, who found that most of his difficulties and obstructions—and in the Orient they are many—could be surmounted after a heart-to-heart talk with the Emir, whose unfailing good humour and ability to see the amusing side of every problem paved the way to a quick understanding. Lawrence, who was of the serious-minded type, found the Emir too humorous to be a prophet and the leader of a movement, but in times of peace, or that which passes for peace in Arab lands, the gift of detecting the funny side of a difficult problem almost invariably leads to a solution.

The cause of the disagreement was that the Emir, on the instigation of his Cabinet, had appointed to the Legion two officers of whom Peake did not approve. Not only were they quite unsuited physically and in every other respect for executive positions in a military force, but their past records proved that they were likely to be a liability rather than an asset. As Peake's protests were unheeded he took direct action. Abandoning his uniform, he went about in plain clothes and refrained from visiting his office for so long that the Emir at last invited him to the Palace to explain matters. On Peake's attending in mufti, Abdulla expressed great surprise and asked the reason for this unusual departure from established custom, whereupon Peake explained that he had tendered his resignation since it was quite impossible for him to command a force in which the officers were appointed without his approval. His Highness at once flared up and a royal row ensued, with both the Emir and Peake shouting at each other, until the humorous side of the dispute became apparent to both and the meeting ended in roars of laughter. A compromise was made, and sealed by kisses on both cheeks, by which Peake agreed to accept one of the unwanted officers whilst the Emir promised to discharge the other. About a month later the officer Peake had been forced to accept paraded in a drunken condition to mount the royal guard at the Palace and this ended his short career, for the Emir was a very staunch upholder of the faith, and addiction to alcohol was in his eyes one of the worst crimes that a Muslim could commit.

It was now the turn for Kerak to cause trouble, and both the town itself and the district immediately surrounding it blazed up in an open rising. On this occasion, however, the movement was not directed against the Government, but was a purely private squabble on an enterprising scale between the two big families in the town, who from the earliest days had been jealous of, and hostile one to the other. Such antagonisms are a frequent, in fact a usual, state of affairs in all small towns in the Middle East; the reasons for the mutual antipathies are generally lost in the mists of time, and may possibly in some cases date back to the period of the Arab conquest when the two families were nomad tribes among whom a blood feud existed.

Kerak is a Crusader fortress town, built on the extreme top of a large hill and surrounded by the battlemented walls built by Renaud de Chatillon after the First Crusade. The wall and its ancient gateway are quite intact to-day and the greater part of the Crusader buildings, the keep, the stables and the vast dining-hall of the knights are still extant, and in a most satis-

factory state of repair. A winding narrow path leads up the side of the hill to the gateway and it is easy to understand how, in the days of the bow and arrow and the primitive catapult, Kerak was absolutely impregnable, withstanding every assault made by the Saracens, and falling only when sedition and "fifth column" work within the walls undermined its resistance. The town is surrounded by rocky hills terraced for cultivation, and on the western side the highlands fall away in steep slopes and sudden declivities to the Dead Sea some six thousand feet below.

The two tribes in Kerak are the Beni Hemeida, who are of Central Arabian origin, and the Majalis from Hebron in Palestine. Hebron, which to-day has a large and important market, was in the past the main trading centre of Palestine, and apparently the inhabitants founded small business colonies in most of the big towns in the Middle East. The famous bazaar of Cairo, known as the Muski, is in the Arab world the Khan Khalili (the caravan halting place of the Hebron people), and members of this vast family live in various markets all over Egypt, "keeping themselves to themselves" as the saying is. As they are invariably most successful and prosperous tradesmen they are not very popular among their neighbours, and the Beni Hemeida, with only about four hundred years of business training behind them, dislike them intensely.

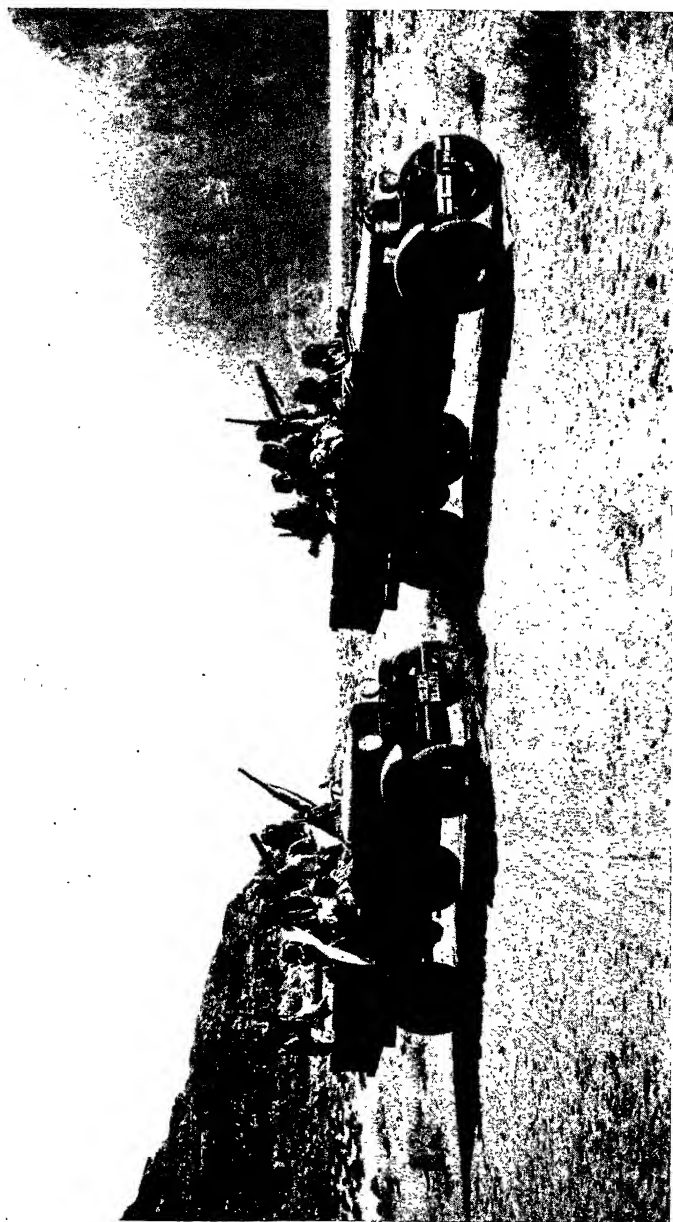
The situation in the town when Peake went there with a detachment of the Legion was that no one dared to venture out into the fields, as sharpshooters from both sides opened fire on sight, and in the town itself there were almost incessant exchanges of shots after dark. The Majalis live at one end of the town and the Beni Hemeida at the other, while the big Christian community live between, and it was the Christians who felt this state of intermittent war far more than anyone and who demanded assistance. The force that Peake brought to Kerak was a large one, and immediately the warring tribes realized that there could be no amusing brushes with the police they came in and made peace. Whilst the authorities were at work on the armistice the active *kaimakam* of the town, who had been in the invidious position of being helpless for months, seized the opportunity to fill up his prison with all the leading bad characters of both sides, and looked forward to the busy time when, with this satisfactory supply of gaol-bird labour, he could carry out a series of useful public works, for which the opportunity is denied to officials in areas where the people are well-behaved and commit no crimes. As he said to Peake on the departure of the main force, his establishment of convicts would be fifty for the next two years, and before that time was up. "Inshallah we shall have more trouble, and be able to fill it up again."

Life was never dull in Kerak, as all the inhabitants were gifted with a keen sense of humour, which on the whole is unusual in the Arab world, because there are so many things about which it is unseemly one should make a joke. For instance, our national characteristic of making facetious remarks about the weather is in Mahommedan circles regarded as a form of blasphemy, for the weather is sent by God, and to grumble about it is to give offence to the Deity, who is responsible, and to jeopardize one's future life. Considering that the people of Kerak could see nothing absurd in their silly internecine feud with their neighbours, which made life difficult



AN ARAB LUNCHEON PARTY





ARMED CARS OF THE ARAB LEGION

and interfered with trade, it is strange that they should have enjoyed a joke more than any other community in Trans-Jordan.

They had an endless fund of good stories about various characters in the town, and the first evening Peake was there he saw an old gentleman in flowing robes and a long white beard mount to the flat roof of his house and look carefully over the town.

"That's the Qadi," said one of the notables to Peake. "He goes up there every evening just before *asha* (dinner)."

"To pray, I suppose," said Peake innocently.

"Oh, no," was the reply; "he goes up there to have a look round, and see from which house the largest amount of smoke is coming. When he has satisfied himself as to who has got the biggest fire going he calls round just about dinner-time. That is why so many people are buying these new *waboors* (Primus stoves) which give off no smoke."

Another good story told Peake, whilst waiting for peace in Kerak, was a chestnut which dated back probably to the days of the wars between the Crusaders and the Saracens, when Kerak was often beleaguered by Saladin, but it fitted in very conveniently as an episode of the recent war, and it was related to Peake as such. The Turks, he was told, were then after an Arab spy, who had been giving information to Lawrence, and as they knew he was hiding in the town they made frequent house-to-house searches. The spy, realizing he would be caught and hanged sooner or later, arranged with the town sweeper, or scavenger, to carry him out through the gates in a sack of rubbish to enable him to make his escape. When the sweeper, after his morning's work, arrived at the gateway of the town with two donkeys laden with sacks of refuse the Turkish guard stopped him.

"What have you in this sack?" he asked.

"Broken glass," said the sweeper promptly.

The Turkish soldier kicked the sack hard, whereupon a voice from inside said: "Tinkle-tinkle."

After peace had been made all through the Kerak area there was still some raiding going on in the outlying Belka district, where a section of Beni Hemeida were looting their neighbours' animals and had refused to come in and agree to a cessation of hostilities. Luckily as Peake was returning to Amman with the main body of the force they ran into a large party of the Beni Hemeida out on a raid. The normal way of dealing with raiding Arab countries is by means of tribal courts, which sit months after the offence, and which endeavour to fix liability and assess damages; but, as no tribe ever attempts to pay over the fines inflicted, the Arab courts, so far from preventing raiding, usually foment it and cause it to be carried out on a larger scale. As Peake meant to make peace at all costs, and settle the Kerak trouble for all time, he adopted the very drastic method of having the leaders of the raiding party soundly thrashed, and after this there was peace of the perfect variety around Kerak for many years to come.

Whilst Peake was away in Kerak the Emir took a step he had long contemplated, and which was overdue, and dismissed the Government he had formed immediately after his arrival in the country. The new Prime Minister, Ali Ridha Pasha Rikabi, was an ex-Turkish official of the very

best type, a born administrator, a financial expert and a man of outstanding intellect. Of him Peake says : "he was at his best when inspecting some Government office as he would call for all the books and ledgers, flick over the pages like lightning, and then say to the trembling accountant : "You are not fit for your job. Here on this page there is a mistake in addition of seven piastres. In your book of receipts I see you received animal tax of twenty-one piastres from Sobeih Fulani, but there is no record of it in the ledger ; and there is a second mistake in addition on the following page." According to Peake his ability to detect error when turning over pages rapidly was positively uncanny, and during Rikabi's term of office there was trepidation in all Government offices throughout the land and, with it, increased efficiency.

There are many good stories told of old Rikabi Pasha, who in the days before the war had been Governor of Jerusalem, and an exceedingly popular and just one. When he came over to the city on his appointment as Prime Minister of Trans-Jordan he was received by the Chief Secretary, who outlined to him the policy he was to adopt and who, being unaware of the old man's past career, adopted unconsciously the attitude that Rikabi was new to government work. Rikabi said meekly he hoped he would be able to manage as the last time he had been in this particular office he had been seated in the chair now occupied by the Chief Secretary.

In the days of his governorship of Jerusalem he found the Ceremony of the Holy Fire at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre one of his great trials, as practically every policeman in the city had to be on duty the whole day, and the enormous crowds of fervent worshippers who flocked into the church and filled the streets leading to it were a great danger. There was always the risk of some major tragedy owing to people becoming stifled and trampled on in the crush and, when the Holy Fire was delayed, the situation became acute. One year when Rikabi was in office the Fire did not materialize until 6 o'clock in the evening and the police and ambulances had been active all the afternoon, carrying out exhausted and fainting worshippers, including a number of casualties due to the crush of people. So Rikabi sent for the Patriarchs of the various churches connected with the ceremony.

"Your Beatitudes," he said with great politeness, "yesterday the Holy Fire did not arrive until 6 p.m. and my police were hard put to it to prevent a tragedy. I have called you here to tell you that in future the Holy Fire must appear before noon as after midday I shall instruct the police to close the doors of the church."

"But, Your Excellency," the Patriarchs protested, "the Holy Fire is not controlled by us. It is a manifestation sent by the Deity Himself—and we cannot order it."

"Yes, Your Beatitudes," replied Rikabi, "I understand that, but I can only inform you that, unless the Holy Fire in future has appeared by midday, I shall close the church, and I imagine the Deity will not mind whether it appears to a full church or an empty one." It is said that on all future occasions during Rikabi's rule the Holy Fire descended before noon, and the ceremony went off without mishap.

## CHAPTER XI

## FRICTION WITH THE FRENCH

"The pleasing way is not the right;  
He that would conquer Heaven must fight."

(*Francis Quarles.*)

AS THE RESULT OF THE DEFEAT AND DISCOMFITURE OF THE ARAB LEGION at El Kura the previous year the tribesmen of the area had been called upon to pay compensation for the men killed and horses lost in the battle, but this they refused flatly to do. It was therefore necessary to administer a lesson to these Arabs, whose behaviour had become insufferable owing to their decisive victory over the original members of the Legion. Peake, however, hoped he would be able to bring them to reason without severe fighting and heavy casualties, and his plan of campaign was the opposite of that adopted by his subordinate the year before.

The difficult country in the Kura district has already been described in a previous chapter, and Peake's object was throughout the coming operations to get into the heart of the country without descending into one of the deep valleys, where he could be surprised and overwhelmed by riflemen from the heights. This was not easy and, moreover, the newly-formed Legion were not in the best of spirits about the coming operations as they could not forget the object lesson of the previous year, and there were insistent rumours in the ranks concerning a Turkish force, which many years previously had been wiped out to a man when going up against the Kura folk.

In the middle of May, 1922, the whole Legion, horse, foot and guns, marched out from Amman, and arrived at Mafrak in the evening, having covered thirty-five miles during the day. The following day they moved on to Remtha, and from Remtha to Irbid, where the force was joined by two armoured cars from the Royal Air Force, which were detailed to figure merely as a moral factor as the whole of the Kura area was quite impossible for motor vehicles. At Remtha Peake collected the various sheikhs of the district, who, though not active allies of the Kura peoples, could be relied upon to take sides against the Legion if things went awry. These men Peake caused to walk in front of his horse during the march from Remtha to Irbid, and in consequence there was no trouble from snipers.

At Irbid Peake halted his force on a high hill overlooking the village and sent in a messenger under a white flag to ask the head sheikh of the Kura to come out and discuss matters, but unfortunately this he refused to do. Had he done so the probability is the matter could have been settled without active hostilities, for he was a likeable and genial old gentleman, and in later years, when the early troubles were a thing of the past, became a great friend of Peake's.

From Irbid the normal way into the heart of the Kura was by a village called Mazar, but the drawback to this route for a punitive column was

that the track leading to the little settlement lay up an open valley commanded by the hills on either side—a suicidal way of approach which no commander of any experience would dream of using. Peake, however, sent a small party of his men along it as a blind, instructing them to show themselves as much as possible, to take over a house and store it with forage, and generally to make conspicuous preparations for the passage of troops which he had in fact no intention of sending that way. The ruse succeeded: The enemy was deceived as to the direction of the attack, and whilst the tribesmen were busily massing on the heights commanding this approach, Peake and his force made a night march from Irbid, skirting Mazar on the south, along a mountainous track which led over high ground to the village of Taiyiba. By dawn on the following morning the whole Legion was drawn up on the ridge overlooking the Kura, with the first village directly beneath them. There was no sign of movement below, so Peake, thinking the village deserted, sent out a patrol to occupy the houses. No sooner had the men left cover, however, than they were met by heavy rifle fire, which ceased momentarily as a Royal Air Force aeroplane passed over and dropped a stick of bombs, but broke out again as soon as the machine had disappeared. Evidently the place had not been left entirely unguarded. By this time the tribesmen who had been watching the exits from Mazar for the force which never materialized, realized their mistake and began to stream back over the hills towards the village. Fire was opened on them from the guns at a range of one thousand five hundred yards, but they came on unchecked and seemed almost certain to reach their objective, whence it would have been difficult to dislodge them without incurring heavy casualties, when Peake's Arab Staff Officer noticed a large flock of cattle and sheep sheltering with their shepherds in a bush-grown wadi by the village and advised that the guns be trained on them instead of on the advancing tribesmen. The result was astounding. After no more than two shells had burst in close proximity to the animals the white flag went up and the defenders of the village came forward to surrender—only just in time, for hardly had the Legion occupied the houses when the main body of the Kura tribesmen appeared over the rise, but finding the village strongly held retired without venturing an attack.

The following day, still keeping to the high ground despite the difficulty of marching over rocks and scrub, the force went on until they reached the village of Kufr Kifya, from which the guns could command the greater part of the Kura. The village happened to be within easy artillery range of the head man of the district at Tibna, and his house and garden received a direct hit. This proved to be the last straw and immediately the Kura people began to come in large numbers to surrender. Previously they had had always to deal with punitive columns, which marched up deep valleys as lambs to the slaughter, but a column marching always on high ground and presenting no such opportunity created a situation beyond their ken, and the rebellion was over.

Sheikh Kaleib himself, the head sheikh, did not surrender with the remainder of his tribe, but made off post-haste to Amman, where he threw himself upon the mercy of the Emir. Unfortunately he did not strike Abdulla during one of his lenient moods, which were the general rule

rather than the exception, and found himself in prison with a year's detention to serve. Peake, however, begged him off after six months of the sentence, and the old man on leaving prison came to thank him for his help. Sheikh Kaleib explained that there were no ill-feelings—he had played his cards and lost—and he was going back to his village to persuade his people to serve the Trans-Jordan Government faithfully. There was, however, just a little point that rankled, and that was his old coffee mortar had disappeared from his yard during the attack on his village. This coffee mortar of roughly carved stone was an heirloom presented to his great grandfather by the ibn Rashid of Hail of those days whilst they were fighting against the Qaid el Amm el Fransawi (the French general, i.e. Napoleon) on the plain of Esdraelon. It happened that Peake had picked it up after the battle, thinking it was merely one of those antique relics to be found in the vicinity of many Arab villages which none of the inhabitants recognize as being of value. On hearing that this mortar was a cherished family heirloom, Peake went into his house, brought it out and returned it to its owner, thus cementing a friendship that lasted throughout Peake's service in the country.

Since the year 1920 there had been insistent rumours of the growing power of the Wahabis of Riyadh under the leadership of Abdul Aziz ibn Saud, now King of Saudi-Arabia. This family established itself in the Nejd area of the eastern portion of central Arabia in the middle of the eighteenth century by the usual Arabian method of a revival of religion—in this case in an ultra-Puritan form. King Ibn Saud has frequently been likened to Oliver Cromwell, and there is in fact a great similarity between the characters of the two men, for as regards religion Oliver Cromwell was a Puritan, he subjugated England with a Puritan force, and he was a strong and quite ruthless ruler with wonderful gifts of administration; and all this applies equally to King Abdul Aziz.

It is a very usual thing these days to hear the accusation made that we backed the wrong horse in our Arabian campaign against the Turk, and that our political leaders and Arab advisers should have foreseen that Ibn Saud of Riyadh in Nejd was a greater power in the Arab world than King Hussein of the Hashimite family in Mecca. In some ways this is true, though only a prophet with exceptional powers of foretelling the future could have seen it in 1915, but, in all these many criticisms of our handling of Arab affairs made by the captious in days of peace, the fact that our actions between 1914 and 1918 were dictated entirely by the expediency of winning a world war is never taken into account. When it was decided to instigate and assist the revolt of the Arabs in the desert against the left flank of the Turks in Trans-Jordan we required the backing and active help of the Arab family which could control and lead the tribes from Mecca to Medina in the south to Amman and Damascus in the north, and in those days, 1915, there was no question whatsoever that, however great Ibn Saud's influence might have been in Nejd and farther east, he was practically unknown to the Beduin tribes along the western side of Arabia. In fact, so far from fighting with him the probability is they would have fought against him. The obvious choice for this campaign therefore was Hussein and his sons, whose influence as men of the world, as well

as Arab leaders, spread well beyond the deserts and as far as northern Syria and the Turkish frontiers, and even to Constantinople itself.

It is so easy to sit at one's desk in days of peace and write furious criticism of actions taken hurriedly in war to win a campaign or stave off defeat. In the atmosphere of war again, and all that a world war means, it is possible now to understand the various situations more clearly, and, whilst dealing with the "wrong Arab horse" accusation, one might look at the same time at the Sykes-Picot treaty and the Balfour Declaration, both of which have been execrated in many quarters. The Sykes-Picot Treaty, or something very much like it, had to be made at the beginning of the Arab Revolt as France, thinking of her old associations and special interests in Syria, wanted to know exactly what we were doing and proposed to do in Arabia. It is hardly necessary to recall that France and ourselves were fighting side by side against the Germans, and also that France can be very suspicious and jealous of her rights; and France had some historical claims to hold a watching brief on Syria. Space does not permit a detailed account of these claims, but up till 1916 the people of the country were markedly pro-French in all things; the upper classes speaking French on all occasions, managing their homes and businesses on French lines, and calling their children by French names. Sir Mark Sykes may be excused if he was under the impression that Syria would welcome French in place of Turkish control, and in any case the treaty had to be made and made quickly as we were fighting for our very existence and France was our main ally.

The Balfour Declaration was, to put the matter in a nutshell, a gesture to the United States. It was framed principally to enlist the sympathies of the Jewish people of America and have an influence on their attitude towards the war. It was made solely with this object in view, and it succeeded. When one comes to put into the scales the enormous stake at issue and on the opposite side the future well-being, or rather personal feelings, of only a million people of whom no one in the Occident knew very much, it is easy to understand the reason why the Declaration was made and to excuse it. One must remember also that the Balfour Declaration has not brought physical suffering on the people of Palestine, it has not caused loss of freedom, nor starvation, nor deprivation of rights, as is the case in so many erstwhile free States to-day. The worst it has done has been to make the Arabs of the country fear—and with some reason—that they will be a political minority in the future.

At the beginning of 1922 the Wahabis of Ibn Saud were beginning to push outwards from Nejd in all directions, and Beduin of the neighbouring States were nervous because the raids of the Wahabis were not the usual half-friendly affairs of the nomad world, but were savage slaughters by fanatical tribesmen, enforcing their special brand of Puritan religion on the backslider from the true Faith. The Wahabis, like our own Puritans of the seventeenth century, were utterly ruthless in enforcing their beliefs, condemning everything which made life pleasant, and the use of tobacco, alcohol and even coffee was discountenanced. The Arabs of Trans-Jordan have no use for alcohol, but they are confirmed pipe and cigarette smokers, and several cups of black coffee a day with its *Habahan* flavouring is one of

the little luxuries which makes a hard life worth living. For this, if for no other reason, the advance of the Wahabis was dreaded in Trans-Jordan.

One day Mr. St. John Philby, driving back from the neighbourhood of Sirhan, noticed an Aneiza *wasm*, or tribal mark, scrawled on the wall of a Roman ruin, and the Aneiza were of the Wahabis and the strongest fighting tribe of the Nejd. He mentioned this to the Amman Government, saying: "We shall have them raiding here soon," but none of the Arab officials saw the sinister significance of the incident, and it seems extraordinary that it remained for a British official to notice and identify a strange symbol of lines and half-circles, which to the educated Arabs conveyed, nothing, and to forecast that which was shortly to occur.

Shortly afterward, whilst Peake was staying with Philby in his house in Amman, the Prime Minister came round at 6 a.m. on a hot July morning to say that there were strong rumours the Wahabis had attacked a village some nine miles from Amman. He stated he did not believe the story himself, but thought it would be a good idea if Peake got in touch with the R.A.F. and asked them to send out an aeroplane, as it would have the effect of calming the people, who were becoming very alarmed.

By 8 a.m. the rumours had become so insistent that Peake and Philby decided to go out with the armoured cars to see for themselves, and on arrival at the small village of Teneib they discovered that for once there was truth in an Arab rumour, for scattered about the village were some forty-five corpses of men and women of the Beni Sakhr tribe. There were no signs of the Wahabis as, whilst they were murdering and looting, an aeroplane carrying supplies to Ziza passed overhead, and, though the pilot of the machine noticed nothing untoward happening beneath him, the Wahabis thought they were about to be bombed and beat a hurried retreat.

They were followed by a small party of infuriated Beni Sakhr, bent on revenge, who caught up with the rear of the raiders and killed a few, bringing back a standard of the Wahabis. This was mounted on a long staff and consisted of a huge piece of calico—bearing on the edge the trademark of Sassoon and Coy., Bombay—the top half being green and the lower half red, with white calico letters on it that read: "*La Allah Illa Allah Mohammed Rasulu*" ("There is no God but God, and Mohammed is his Prophet"). This was afterwards presented by the Emir to Sir Herbert Samuel in Jerusalem, and thus did the banner of Muslim renaissance enter the Zionist stronghold.

Peake and Philby went off post-haste in the cars hoping to catch up with the Wahabis and teach them a lesson, but saw not a trace of them, as their flight had been so rapid. The raiders had come into Trans-Jordan by way of the well-watered Wadi Sirhan, which lies only fifty miles east of Amman, and after this occurrence it was obvious that a post must be established in the Wadi to watch the open desert. But for the timely arrival of the aeroplane it is difficult to say what might have happened, as it was learnt later the Wahabis' plan was, first to attack and wipe out the Beni Sakhr inhabitants of the villages south of Amman, and then make a raid on the capital with the intention of murdering the Emir himself. As the result of this the Trans-Jordan Government asked Palestine for permission



to occupy the head of the Wadi Sirhan, but as this meant sending a force into a territory in dispute, for no dividing line had been fixed between Trans-Jordan and the area of Ibn Saud, the Palestine Government did not reply. Trans-Jordan then took the law into its own hands and prepared an expedition which was to consist of one thousand mounted Beduin and two hundred of the Arab Legion, and Peake was appointed to command. Unfortunately the rations for the march had been issued to the Beduin the day before the operation was due to start, with the result that of the one thousand only about twenty turned up, for, as Peake says: "Having got their food they saw no necessity to march one hundred miles to eat it, and therefore settled down to do so in their homes."

After this the Legion became worried, as the savagery and strength of the Wahabis had been a constant topic of conversation in the *suks* (markets) for several months and they considered two hundred men too small a force to venture into the enemy's country. They came to Peake and explained they had been enlisted to serve in Trans-Jordan only, and therefore would not march to Sirhan. Peake said they could do as they pleased, but he hoped that among them there would be one brave enough to go as he proposed to start out on camel at 5 p.m. and would like one companion. Immediately the whole party fell in, and the march to Kaf, on the eastern side of the Sirhan, was made without incident.

Kaf is a small, miserable village by an important water hole on the eastern side of the Wadi Sirhan, and it is dominated by a very steep hill which is quite impregnable to any form of Beduin warfare. Here Peake spent eighteen miserable days in blistering heat with only the most unpalatable water to drink, then, leaving his none-too-happy men in the small fort they had built "out in the blue," he returned to Amman, where he agitated for a portable wireless plant to enable the newly-created post to communicate with Headquarters. This, as a matter of course, was refused in those carefree, "penny wise pound foolish" days when no thought was taken for the morrow, and the post at Kaf therefore was performing no useful purpose, and was moreover in considerable danger.

Whilst the Emir Abdulla was in London that autumn the Foreign Office took him to task over the activities of the Sultan Atrash of Syria, who, having made one of his periodical risings against the French, had taken refuge in Trans-Jordan, where he was actively raising another raiding party. The Emir dealt with this most effectually, and with considerable acumen, by asking for a telegraph form and dictating a telegram to Peake instructing him to use all his endeavours to capture Sultan Atrash. This telegram, despatched at Foreign Office expense, gave complete satisfaction to everyone but Peake. The Emir had put the onus of the difficult task on an Englishman recognized by the Foreign Office and was free of all further worry, and the Foreign Office could adopt the attitude that all necessary steps had been taken to curtail the rebel's activities. The trouble with the Sultan Atrash was that, like Mrs. Hawkins's mouse, "one had to catch him first," and this was not easy when every member of the Trans-Jordan Government and, in fact, every inhabitant of the State was doing his utmost to defeat Peake's various attempts.

On one occasion Peake received reliable information that Sultan

Atrash was hiding in an encampment only nine miles from Amman, and made secret preparations to raid it by night. The same spy, however, having imparted the valuable information and been paid for it, then took steps to see the wanted man was notified in time to make his escape, and drew his reward for this kindly action also. To make certain that nothing untoward occurred the officer in charge of the police then managed to lose his way, and surrounded the wrong tent in the wrong place.

The French were furious at the ease with which Atrash evaded capture and put the whole onus of the failure on Peake, whom they accused of openly aiding the Arabs and assisting them to rise against the French. Unfortunately they had some material on which to base these charges, for they were able to prove that on one occasion Peake had sat in the same room and drunk coffee with the wanted man. This was quite true as Peake, when at Zerka on patrol, called on his Shishan friends, who lived in the area, and whilst he was drinking coffee two or three Beduin sheikhs entered. In the Arab world people are never formally introduced as it is taken for granted that everybody knows everyone they are likely to meet, and as a matter of actual fact they do. Whether this is due to some sixth sense, or gift of reading thoughts, the fact remains that every Beduin appears to know, not only the identity, but the complete family history of any dim figure that may appear over the horizon half a mile away, and they can probably explain exactly what the man in question is doing. On the other hand, if the inquirer should happen to be a member of the police, there is nothing quite so abysmal in the world as the Beduins' ignorance of all matters ; it is doubtful, in fact, if he knows his own identity !

One of the Beduin sheikhs sat next to the British commandant and for half an hour or more Peake talked with him on various topics, finding him a most entertaining and well-informed man. It was not until the following day that Peake learnt his delightful new friend was Sultan Atrash, in search of whom his patrols had been scouring the desert for weeks. The French made great capital out of this incident, and some years later an article appeared in *Le Matin* on Peake's supposed activities and rebel sympathies, which caused some comment in British official circles. Peake tried to nail down the lie, but found it difficult, and some time later when staying at Government House in Jerusalem there was an official dinner party attended by M. de Jouvenel, the High Commissioner of Syria. Peake managed to have an interview with de Jouvenel, who, knowing the reason, adopted a somewhat casual and offhand tone.

"I understand," he said, "you are complaining about an article that has appeared in the French Press concerning you, but you must understand that France, like your own country, is a democracy and the Press is free. Your papers in England say very much what they please about foreign officials, and our papers in France are the same."

"Yes, Your Excellency," said Peake, "I understand that, but my particular objection is that the article appeared in *Le Matin*."

At this remark the French A.D.C., standing behind his chief, grinned, and made a grimace that indicated a bull's-eye had been scored, for M. de Jouvenel was intimately connected with *Le Matin*.

The Emir spent only one month in London, reporting on his return

that the most interesting feature of our capital was the Zoological Gardens, in which point of view quite a number of people would be prepared to agree with him. He has always shown the greatest interest in zoology, and one of his regrets is that the modern rifle now used by Beduin all over Arabia is resulting in the extermination of the few remaining rare antelope and leopards of the deserts. He left behind in London the British Resident and the Prime Minister to discuss with the Foreign Office the complete independence of the State of Trans-Jordan, together with an increased Grant-in-Aid. In commenting on this, Peake says :

"It is somewhat difficult to understand what was meant by the complete independence of Trans-Jordan, seeing that there was no country in the world less fitted geographically, and in every respect to stand alone. On the East the Wahabis were struggling to take the country and without the British aid were strong enough to do so. On the South King Hussein was striving to make his son, Abdulla, a mere Viceroy of the Hedjaz Kingdom. To the North the French would have been delighted to take any steps to absorb such a troublesome neighbour. While in the West the Zionists were already casting greedy eyes across the Jordan."

These remarks, which might have been applied to several other States in the Middle East, are very much to the point, and so many small countries—and individuals as well—learnt during the nineteen twenties that independence is not so easy to achieve and delightful to experience as it sounds. Here in the British Isles the farmer was finding the same thing, for the sale of land by the big landowners gave the working farmer the opportunity to own his farm, but complete independence was not the wonderful state of affairs he had imagined. In future he had to deal direct with the invading forces of the Income Tax and District Council departments, who were converging on him from all sides : there was no paternal landlord to pay for the upkeep of the houses, the buildings and gates ; and no Grant-in-Aid to assist him to make both ends meet. A state of complete independence is a wonderful and alluring vision—almost a mirage—but it is left to few of us to achieve it, and to enjoy it when obtained.

## CHAPTER XII

### KING HUSSEIN'S ARRIVAL

"Verily he loses his way whom blind men guide." (*Arab proverb.*)

THE YEAR OF 1923 OPENED BADLY AS, OWING TO EXTRAVAGANCE DUE TO A plethora of highly-paid officials and monetary rewards paid to Beduin in return for behaving themselves, not to mention financial assistance to Syrian rebels, the State of Trans-Jordan was practically bankrupt. Hearing of this the Palestine Government wrote letters and offered advice, and the

Air Ministry, who had been asked to accept paternity for the State, were told by the Colonial Office to stop payment of the Grant-in-Aid of the upkeep of the Arab Legion until such time as the Government saw fit to put its house in order. This did not worry the Trans-Jordan Government in the slightest as the money had always been sent to Peake direct, and the withholding of the grant meant that he had not the wherewithal to pay his men or settle the accounts of the various contractors for rations, forage and petrol.

The men of the Legion behaved extremely well in the circumstances and carried on without many complaints, but the contractors were not so obliging. They followed Peake everywhere he went, bursting into house and his office and bursting into tears at the same time, complaining that they were ruined men. Peake took the matter up with the Palestine Government without any satisfactory answer, and when the ration contractor, who was five months behind over the settlement of his account, refused to supply any more food, he took direct action. He sent five hundred men on leave pending discharge and notified the Air Officer Commanding of his action. The result was electrical and by return of post all the Grant-in-Aid was forthcoming, but the whole episode represented a victory for the Trans-Jordan Government, as the Legion being commanded by a Briton they felt that Peake should bear the whole burden of his country's drastic attitude towards the situation which they had created.

Then the liveliness on the Wahabi front developed again and five unfortunate linesmen on the railway south of Amman, who were returning after their day's work by push trolley, were suddenly waylaid by thirteen Wahabi tribesmen, four of the railway men being slaughtered in cold blood and the fifth making his escape. It was a particularly bloodthirsty and entirely beastly business, and the aftermath, which was equally bloodthirsty, was in keeping and a fitting conclusion to the outrage. Peake received the news in Amman at about 9 p.m. and despatched at once a motor detachment to Azrak, which would be the obvious line of retreat of the Wahabis; and the following day the whole of the thirteen raiders were rounded up, two being killed trying to escape and the remaining eleven were brought into Amman.

These eleven were tried by a court, and Peake was unaware what form of court it was or how it was constituted, but the fact remained that it knew its own mind and its verdicts were arrived at and acted upon quickly, which is more than one can say of most courts. The eleven murderers were immediately sentenced to death, the execution to be carried out in public in the market-place, and this decision gave unqualified approval. The men were brought out in pairs, tied to telegraph posts and shot by a firing party of the Legion; and the whole of the population of Amman gathered in the square to witness the execution.

It may be thought that these sentences erred on the side of severity and that the publicity of the executions savoured of brutality, but it must be remembered that the Wahabis with fanatical fury were invading the countries on either side of them and putting peaceful inhabitants, man, woman and child, to the sword. The unfortunate men they had murdered in cold blood were not nomads, so that the excuse of an ancient blood feud

could not be made. They were peaceful townsfolk, working on the railway, with no concern whatsoever in the affairs of the Beduin, and they had been slaughtered in cold blood solely to satisfy a lust for killing. The publicity was necessary because no Beduin believes anything he does not see with his own eyes, and always, when some well-known bandit and murderer is executed in the normal fashion behind the locked doors of the prison, the rumour spreads all over the local market-places that the hanging or shooting did not actually take place as either the authorities were frightened of revenge from his relatives and released him, or some senior official received a bribe to let him go. To impress the general public, and to let the news reach the enemy to provide a warning, it is essential sometimes to hold a public execution to prove that the Government can be strong and relentless when necessary.

That summer Peake was granted leave to the United Kingdom, to which he had been looking forward for many hot weary months, pining for the cool damp breezes of England. It proved to be a very short holiday, however, for the first thing that greeted him as he drove out of Victoria station was an evening newspaper placard bearing the words: "Revolution in Trans-Jordan." One of the great drawbacks to the Middle East is that the silly season, which lasts from the middle of July to the middle of September, in the dog days of summer as is the case with our own, almost invariably takes the form of political rioting, whereas we are content with much milder forms, such as vitriolic correspondences in the newspaper about giant marrows, sea-serpents and the sex, if any, of crooners. There is not an official in the countries around the Suez Canal who has not had his leave stopped or abbreviated on many occasions, and it is particularly disappointing when this occurs, as it did with Peake, after a long spell abroad.

Exactly thirty-two days after leaving Amman he was back again at the Allenby bridge on the Jordan, and on arrival here he was informed by the N.C.O. of the police post that it would be impossible to go farther as the rebels, the Adwan, had closed the road and were holding the heights that commanded it. From the N.C.O. he obtained some details of the rebellion, which as Peake had anticipated had broken out as the result of heavy taxation combined with exemptions granted to some favoured tribes, but not extended to others. The Adwan, whose chief sheikh was Sultan Adwan, occupied most of the country from the Jordan to Es Salt and thence across the plateau Amman itself, and they are the most numerous of all the settled tribes. Their territory marches with that of the Beni Sakhr Beduin to the east, and as usual there was great hostility between the cultivator and the nomad.

The Adwan living conveniently, or, more correctly, inconveniently, close to the capital, had experienced far more of the tax collector and his methods than any other tribe in Trans-Jordan, and they had already registered several complaints. Then the Government's decision to excuse the detested Beni Sakhr from all taxation proved the last straw, and at the head of two hundred armed men Sultan Adwan marched into Amman, going straight to the quarters of the Emir, where two machine-guns had been placed. Sultan requested that they should be withdrawn whilst the matter was discussed, and the Emir, having agreed to this, the Adwan

interviewed the various members of the Government, and, having been promised that their complaints would be attended to, they withdrew.

The Government, having removed the immediate danger, then did nothing whatsoever, and the tax collectors became busy throughout the land again. One morning the news came in that five hundred armed Adwan were only five miles from Amman and were preparing to attack the town. The Government in a panic sent to the Royal Air Force for assistance, and their two armoured cars, together with two hundred and fifty cavalry of the Legion and two hundred infantry, marched out to meet the Adwan. The armoured cars of the Royal Air Force had moved well ahead of the column and out of touch with the cavalry when they discovered suddenly they were immediately behind the enemy. The Adwan then surrounded the cars, plastering them with bullets, and, owing to the fact that in the hurry to turn out the crew had omitted to put the armour-plating on them, the cars could do very little. A number of the Arabs were killed by the machine-guns, but the cars themselves had to break off the action, and, badly mauled, returned to Amman—one car crawling in on its brake drum, its wheel having been shot off.

The fact that British units had taken part in the fighting so depressed the rebels that the main body dispersed during the night. They had felt confident that as their disagreement was with their own rulers entirely, the British Government would not intervene, but on finding they would have both aeroplanes and armoured cars to contend with they threw up the struggle.

When Peake arrived back in the country the rebellion was practically over, and it was the last remaining detachment which he found holding the road east of Allenby bridge. As Peake's sympathies were entirely with the unfortunate Adwan he crossed over and went on alone, trusting that the tribesmen would recognize him. At the first bend in the road he found it blocked with rocks and held by about fifty of the Adwan, but directly they recognized him they rushed up to the car to shake his hand.

He had a long talk with these unhappy people and learnt that, as the result of their rising against taxation the Beni Sakhr had been allowed to raid them as a punishment, and most of them had lost their homes and everything they possessed. It was obvious to Peake that the existing Government were quite unfit to rule, as not only were they taxing out of existence the most industrious and useful section of Trans-Jordan's inhabitants, but they had actually used the wild Beduin of the desert to act as a punitive force. As Peake's whole policy had been based on the checking of the raiding of Beduin and enabling the cultivator to prosper and form the foundation of a State which would pay its way, he took instant steps on his return to Amman to see that the Beni Sakhr were called off and for some of the punishments on the Adwan to be remitted. Though it was only the Adwan of Es Salt and Amman which had taken up arms, the whole settled population of Trans-Jordan were behind them and backing them.

Every important post in the Government at that time was filled by a Syrian or Damascus Arab of the Istiglal party, whose one aim was to extract as much money as possible from Trans-Jordan to carry on the war against the French, and to use the country as a base for operations in Syria. This

state of affairs was not countenanced in any way by the Emir Abdulla, who throughout his reign has endeavoured most loyally to co-operate with the British Government and to maintain peace in his realm, but by virtue of his appointment he was an Oriental monarch, yet nevertheless shorn of most of the powers of an Oriental monarch, and expected to rule, not by an autocracy, but more on the lines of a modern democracy with a Cabinet of Ministers to advise him. Arabia has not yet reached the stage of advancement where this form of Government is a complete success, and by curtailing the Emir's powers we enabled his Ministers to obtain the upper hand. The well-being and prosperity of Trans-Jordan was the last thing the Istiglal ministers considered, and Peake approached the Palestine Government to take some definite steps to check the evil, which was ruining the country and antagonizing the French to such an extent that they might possibly precipitate a crisis by sending a punitive column into Trans-Jordan.

The Palestine Government would take no definite steps, and when Peake discovered that many of the senior officers of the Arab Legion were hand-in-glove with the Istiglal (Independence) party in the Cabinet, which meant he could no longer depend on the loyalty of the Force, he went to see the Emir and Prime Minister. He informed them bluntly that unless instant action was taken to break and discredit the Istiglal party, he would announce he could no longer accept any responsibility for public security in the country. If he were to make this announcement there was not the slightest doubt the British Government would send out troops to restore the situation which was a menace to our relations with France, and with the troops they would no doubt send British administrators to rule the country.

On hearing this both the Emir and his Prime Minister were seriously perturbed, but explained that they also were impotent, as the Istiglal party, backed by their adherents in the Legion and by so many of the more influential men in Trans-Jordan, were too strong to be thrown out. If Peake would take steps to break up the political party in the Legion, from which the Istiglal obtained its strength and position in the country, they on their part would see to the ridding of the Cabinet of some of its most extreme members. Peake agreed to this, as he said it would be easy to eradicate politics entirely from the Legion if he had an absolutely free hand, but he could not be hampered by the Government insisting that the officers to be dismissed should be tried by court-martial. He had no evidence against them which could be produced in court and therefore they would be one and all found not guilty, though he knew for a certain fact that they were most active and influential members of the Istiglal party.

The Emir and Prime Minister agreed to these conditions and Peake then returned to the camp, where there were about seven hundred men in cantonment, to discover how the rank and file would view the coming dismissals. He arrived at this by interviewing privately one or two officers and non-commissioned officers he knew he could trust absolutely and who were in touch with the men, and, having learnt that the rank and file would undoubtedly stand by him, he returned to his headquarters in town where

at 5 p.m. he issued a special order summarily dismissing from the Legion four senior officers, which included one *kaimakam* (colonel) and three *bimbashiya* (majors).

This order fell like a bombshell, and so unexpected and sudden was the blow that no one could believe his eyes. Two thousand copies of the order were printed and distributed so that every man in Amman and its vicinity could read for himself the drastic steps that had been taken, and to prevent silly rumours spreading. Attempts were made by the dismissed officers to get at the men, but steps to counteract this obvious move had been taken in advance and the rank and file remained loyal. All night the town hummed with excitement, the coffee-shops remaining open with every table surrounded by excited and incensed politicians, who talked and gesticulated until dawn came; but with the break of day depression set in and the discomfited Istiglalists went home to breakfast. If the Prime Minister had followed the lead set by Peake, and cleared the Independence party out of the Cabinet, the barometer might have been set fair from 1923, but as he allowed some of the most influential of them to remain in office the party continued its activities, until at last the British Government were compelled to intervene. The removal of the disaffected officers of the Legion, however, was carried out with no repercussions except that the night following the issue of the order, when Peake was sitting in his room, one of the dismissed officers burst in. He was wearing an overcoat, which the season of the year did not warrant, and his right hand was concealed beneath its folds. Peake asked him to sit down, but he refused insultingly, and commenced a violent tirade against the British Government generally and Peake in particular. Peake kept his temper, and using consummate tact talked to him for half an hour, at the end of which the officer flung himself out of the room with his right hand still under his coat. Peake wonders often what it was he held in that right hand.

In January of 1924, King Hussein of the Hedjaz arrived at Akaba by ship with all his suite, and practically everybody in Trans-Jordan went down to meet him. The great majority of them had complaints to make, for in the East there persists the belief that a one-minute personal interview with the "Great," while police are hauling on arms and legs, will remove the wrongs of fifty years, the telling of which would occupy the working hours of a week. No matter how carefully the reception of a monarch or "notable" may be arranged, with no detail overlooked to see that nothing should occur to mar the martial bearing of the assembled police and troops and the general atmosphere of peace and well-being in the State, at the critical moment the whole of the carefully-staged pageant "goes into a flat spin" when the rigid ranks of the guard of honour are broken, and a ragged figure throws itself in the dust yelling that it is *mazloom* (oppressed), that the ruler is an unjust tyrant and the police bloodthirsty murderers. This is such a usual occurrence that possibly the "Great" have become used to it and do not accept it at its face value. It is always a matter for regret and mutual recriminations that such episodes do invariably occur, for police officers and their men have been most active in putting under temporary restraint everybody calculated to mar the harmony of a peaceful day; but it is an unfortunate fact that always one, and usually the most

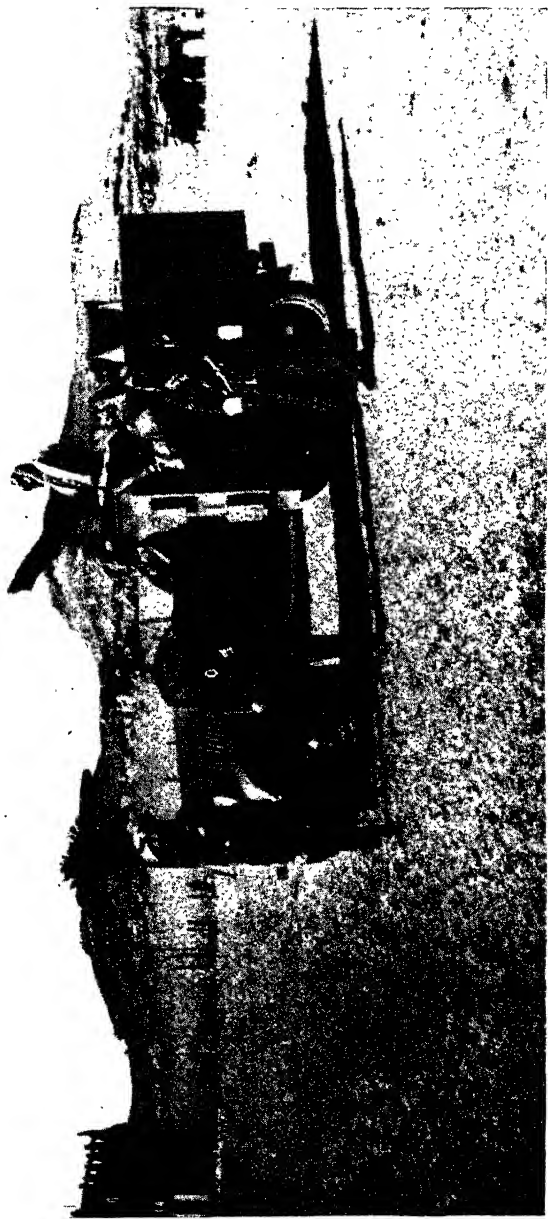


vociferous, has been overlooked. The extraordinary part of this is that, human nature being what it is, complainants should still think it worth while to spoil the reception of the Great, seeing that they have witnessed the fate of their forerunners, who never by any chance have had their grievances redressed, and who in the long run have paid the price for their persistence and temerity.

The arrival of King Hussein at Akaba could not be greeted with the usual royal salute of guns from the shore, owing to the fact that there were no guns with which to fire the salvo, but the difficulty was overcome as the ship, on the Japanese principle of shaking hands with oneself, let off some rounds from her six-inch and announced her own arrival. A fleet of cars had been provided to convey King Hussein to Maan, but the conservative, die-hard Arab monarch refused to enter one. For some seventy years he had travelled about his native deserts by horse or camel and, in common with so many old English country gentlemen, he loathed the sight, sound and smell of a car. A quick-pacing riding mule was found for him and he rode on it from Akaba to El Guera in one day, a distance of over thirty-five miles, which was no mean effort for an old man of seventy-five years of age. The trouble was that, when a monarch rides, it is unseemly for smaller fry to travel in comfort by car, and so the whole of the great retinue of officials and ministers, mounted on anything that Akaba could provide, had to make the journey on horse, mule or camel. As many of the office staff had not been in a saddle for years, if indeed they had ever ridden, their condition at the end of the march was deplorable, but the old King did not turn a hair.

Peake says he rode in solemn and lonely state with two men running in front and two behind, and at no time during the day did he look either to the right or the left. "I have seldom seen a man who possessed a more regal and stately appearance, or one who understood and conformed more punctiliously with the laws of true Arab courtesy and kindness. It was almost impossible to believe the repeated stories of his autocratic and tyrannical ways. On arrival at El Guera, without showing the slightest signs of fatigue, he proceeded to hold a court attended by the officials, officers of the Legion and the sheikhs of the local tribes. He ended up by addressing the officers and men of the Legion, impressing upon them firmly but tactfully that they were to obey me in all things, never forgetting that I had left my home and the comforts of England to come to the barren lands of Arabia in order to help them."

Having escorted King Hussein into Maan, Peake returned to Amman, where he was met by an agitated member of the Palestine Government, whose mission it was to invite His Majesty to Jerusalem, but to make quite certain beforehand that the invitation would be refused. There was a very sound reason for this as if King Hussein had entered Palestine every Arab in the land would have flocked to him, demanding he took instant actions against the working of the Balfour Declaration and the French Mandate in Syria, and as the King was not in a position to move in either of these matters the situation would have been quite as embarrassing to him as to the British Government in Palestine. The Emir Abdulla, when the matter was explained to him, grasped the peculiar significance of it at



MAJOR GLUBB, PEAKE PASHA AND A BEDUIN LEGIONARY



PEAKE'S GARDEN IN THE TOWN OF AMMAN, THE SITE OF A RUINED BYZANTINE CHURCH

once, and agreed that His Majesty should not cross the border ; so the invitation was made, and refused.

Eventually King Hussein came north to Amman and a series of receptions was held, attended by most of the influential Arabs from the north of Arabia—from Western Syria, Damascus and from Palestine—and as at all these gatherings the Emir Abdulla was more or less relegated to a seat in the background, the general effect was not quite in accordance with the ideas of the British Government. They had accepted the Emir as the choice of King Hussein and, having taken this step, were concerned only with maintaining his position and influence in the country as its ruler. It was not part of their policy that he should be treated as a mere viceroy of the Hedjaz Kingdom, taking his orders from his father. To be a successful ruler in an Arab land one must have absolute powers, and the continued presence of King Hussein in the capital of the State as an executive authority, and not a temporary royal guest, was an awkward dilemma. It is difficult to say how the situation would have developed eventually, but luckily before matters took a critical turn Mustapha Kemal, the dictator of Turkey, removed the Sultan from his position as Caliph and expelled him from the country. King Hussein then hurried back to Mecca to proclaim himself as Caliph of the Muslim Faith, and the acute embarrassment was transferred to other theatres, and there, so far as one can ascertain, this embarrassment exists still.

During the King's stay in Amman he gave a big Arab dinner party at which the *pièce de resistance* was young but fully-grown camel, the camel being stuffed with sheep, the sheep with turkeys, the turkeys with chickens, and the chickens with quail. There was probably a lark inside the quail, but apparently this titbit was overlooked, for there was no record of its being discovered. The whole of this wonderful dish rested on a mountain of boiled rice and it is always a mystery on these occasions how, with the small cooking pots of the Arab world, these gargantuan feasts are prepared, and who are the chefs that can turn out fifty cubic feet of perfectly cooked rice where every grain is separate and the whole is snowy-white. Englishmen in particular are amazed, for the average British cook is almost invariably defeated by rice, and is quite content to serve it in a soggy mess.

At these Arab meals no cutlery is laid, the idea being that each guest tears off the joint he fancies with his fingers and, if he is unable to do this, he is permitted to use his own sheath-knife. Actually the European guest finds no necessity to fend for himself, as the sheikhs on either side of him will fill his platter to overflowing, and on these occasions it is always amusing to watch the agony on the face of some polite but dyspeptic British official—accustomed to dine off a small portion of boiled sole followed by a pill—when he finds on his plate the whole body of a fat turkey together with a leg of lamb, all of which he must stow away somewhere or run the risk of giving offence. The eating of rice with one's fingers also presents some difficulty to the uninitiated, as there is the special technique of squeezing it first in one palm to form a *logma* (mouthful), and then transferring it with a graceful movement of the opened fingers to the mouth without dropping a grain. It is as well to have a little practice with this before attending a feast as, if a guest displays any clumsiness, his kindly hosts will

squeeze ambitious mouthfuls for him, and proceed to cram him like a Surrey capon being prepared for the Christmas market.

After the meat course the servitors come round with brass basins, ewers of water and clean towels, and each diner washes his hands before dealing with the next dish, which is usually a Damascus *heloua* (sweet) in the form of piles of pastry running with exceedingly sticky syrup. This is even more difficult to manage without a spoon and fork than the meat course, and here again any inefficiency with the fingers or apparent lack of appetite will be overcome by forcible feeding inspired by the best possible intentions.

### CHAPTER XIII

## THE COMING OF THE WAHABIS

"Innumerable as the stars of night." (*Milton.*)

AFTER THE RETURN OF KING HUSSEIN TO THE HEDJAZ THE ISTIGLAL PARTY once again obtained the upper hand in the Government, and the anti-French activities increased. Peake seized the opportunity whilst there was no British Resident in the country to send for old Rikabi Pasha, the previous Premier, who had long since gone the way of all Prime Ministers—out of office and into the wilderness. It was owing to his resignation some time previously—connived at by the Istiglalists—that the anti-French party had obtained the ascendancy again and renewed their activities. Rikabi agreed to return to office if the Emir should invite him so to do, and Peake therefore interviewed Abdulla, pointing out to him that unless some action were taken immediately there would be another revolution in the country, which this time would undoubtedly cause direct British intervention.

It is always interesting—not to say amusing—to inquire into the various episodes in the Middle East where British troops have been compelled to step in to maintain order, because invariably on these occasions, whether they occur in Palestine, Irak, Trans-Jordan or Egypt, everybody jumps to the conclusion at once that the British Representative on the spot has connived at and instigated the move. This is implicitly believed by all the inhabitants of the State in question, by all foreign governments, and by the British public at home; whereas the truth is that probably no one has fought against it harder than the British Representative on the spot. One quality that the British possess is that they understand the meaning of the word loyalty and, if it is their duty to serve a foreign government, they will do so faithfully and to the letter to such an extent that almost it appears sometimes they have become anti-British. Another little point—a more mundane one—that has to be taken into consideration is that a call for British intervention is a confession of failure, as these officials hold their positions on the understanding that they will be able to direct a policy that will obviate the use of force; and if force has to be employed ulti-

mately, then it might be as well to try another British representative in the hope that he will do better.

The Emir Abdulla agreed to the reinstatement of Rikabi, but the new Premier had insufficient backing to rid the Government of all its anti-French members, and he could do little to check their activities. Then a very serious incident occurred in the most unfortunate circumstances. Immediately after Rikabi, with Peake in attendance, had made a tour of inspection in the Northern District, primarily with the idea of discovering something about the alleged help rendered to Syrian rebels, a small party consisting of two French officers with their wives, who were going to Mezereeb lake for a moonlight picnic, were attacked by raiders and the two ladies were killed. The French authorities openly accused Peake and Rikabi of instigating and arranging the raid, for it had happened immediately after their visit.

As a result of this Peake demanded an absolutely free hand, and with a considerable force of the Legion he surrounded a number of the villages on the frontier by night, arresting many of the wanted men and putting the area under Martial Law. Several people endeavouring to escape were shot, and the remainder extradited to the French authorities in Syria. The house of the Syrian leader, Mustapha Khalili, was searched, but the man himself was hiding in Syria, to be captured afterwards by a Trans-Jordan secret agent and handed over to the French in Deraa. In his house were four machine-guns, many rifles, and all the explosives and materials necessary for blowing up railways and bridges. The French, however, despite these actions, never forgave Peake, and to this day there are officials of Syria who believe that he was the chief instigator of the rebels. This attitude was difficult to understand as, when the boot was on the other foot and our Government required the handing over of wanted men, the French were singularly unhelpful and unable to do anything. The attitude they adopted invariably when he asked them to arrest some Palestinian rebel, who had several killings to his account, was that his offence was a political one, and therefore not subject to the laws of extradition. The same excuse, of course, could be used with regard to the Syrian raiders wanted by the French.

The laws of extradition when applied to Arab races appears to be framed deliberately to prevent the handing over of a prisoner, and such is the correspondence and delay that either the officials demanding extradition become wearied of it all and forget or, if by any chance the request is granted, the prisoner escapes. On the Sinai side of Trans-Jordan, Peake and the writer had their own special and quite unofficial system of extradition, which required no correspondence. At a certain spot on a certain day representatives of the two police forces would meet and exchange greetings and then, the exact line of the frontier having been determined, the prisoner would be gently impelled across it to be arrested on the other side. This system complied with the letter, if not the spirit, of the laws governing extradition, for the wanted man was not actually handed over, but released and placed in such a position that his re-arrest was a certainty. Whatever the defects of this system, it did prevent the bandits and raiders of one country using the frontier as an aid to their misdeeds in the other, and in

Arab lands the Latin proverb, "*Necessitas est lex temporis et loci*" ("Necessity is the law of time and place"), provides the simplest solution of difficulties.

The natural hospitality of the desert Beduin to the wayfarer is one of the most charming attributes of an attractive people, but the unfortunate part about it is that it is so spontaneous and whole-hearted that other races are apt to take full advantage of it. The writer has known cases where his well-fed, well-paid servants whilst on patrol have been offered and have accepted the complete store of flour and dates of some small Beduin family, leaving them so far as one could see completely destitute. It is most difficult to cope with this hospitality, but unless something is done the police patrols of an Arab country live entirely on the Beduin, eating their food whilst their horses make a hearty meal off the encampment's meagre supply of forage. As the Beduin live a hand-to-mouth existence, and seldom know where next month's rations are coming from, something has to be done to prevent them from starving themselves in order to entertain men who have haversacks full of food and nosebags crammed with corn, but the solution is not easy. There is proof too that there is nothing new about this state of affairs; and that other races have been faced with the same problem, as on a big stone column in a Libyan oasis there is carved a Roman proclamation stating the Governor is incensed to hear that his police and officials when on patrol live entirely on the people; that this is to cease, and the Governor therefore orders the people not to offer hospitality and forbids his officials to accept it."

In the Arab Legion some such order had been made by the Syrian members of the Government, and was observed probably more in the breach than the observance. One day a party of twelve signallers from the force were putting up a telephone line between Kerak and Tafleh and they stopped one night at the tents of some Majali Arabs, who offered them food for themselves and forage for their horses, which they refused on account of the order. The following morning they discovered that five of their horses had been stolen, obviously by the Majali, and which their Arab hosts refused to return. Some of these signallers then went to Kerak and reported the occurrence by telephone to Peake, who came down at once to see the Majali. The Majali explained that they had taken the horses, but that their action was quite lawful according to Arab custom. The Legion signallers had come to their tents to sleep, but had refused food, and to refuse to eat food of a man when you are in his tent is not only an insult but is an indication that he is an enemy. They were therefore within their rights to take the horses of men who proclaimed openly they came as enemies. Peake explained how the occurrence had happened, that it was due to a direct order, and this explanation was greeted with roars of laughter. The Majali promised to return the horses at once, but expressed the hope that there would be no further official interference with old Beduin customs. The order had been made by educated Syrians, and as Peake said: "It afforded proof that the average Arab official is astoundingly ignorant of the ways and custom of the real Arab—the Beduin—and that any Englishman who has read Doughty's *Arabia Deserta* is better informed on the subject." These remarks, of course, do not apply to the Emir Abdulla, who is descended in the direct line from the Prophet,

and who is pure Beduin and an expert on their laws and customs. In connection with this little episode concerning the significance of eating the "bread and salt" of a host it is interesting to recall the execution of Renaud de Chatillon, the Crusader over-lord of Trans-Jordan, by Saladin after the Christian defeat at Hittin. Saladin had sworn to kill Renaud de Chatillon on account of his raids on the Mahommedan pilgrims going to the holy city of Mecca, and when Guy, the King of Jerusalem, and the surviving knights were brought into the tent of Saladin as prisoners he offered them food and drink. Guy, after drinking, passed the cup to Renaud de Chatillon, but Saladin intervened at once, saying that he himself had not offered refreshment to Renaud, and he then drew his sword and cut him down as he stood.

Whilst the Government of Trans-Jordan was occupying itself with affairs on the Syrian frontier the situation in Central Arabia was becoming increasingly menacing, as the Wahabis pushed out their frontiers east and south, feeling for weak spots in accordance with their acknowledged intention to subjugate all Arabia and purge the religion of its various schisms and irregularities, which, in their view, had crept in of recent years. There is, of course, no one who is quite as intolerant of other people's views and more certain of his own than the militant Puritan, nor anyone so willing to employ ruthless slaughter and brutality in his efforts to teach the pure religion and inspire the love of God.

The Trans-Jordan Government were fully aware of the threat from Central Arabia and of a sudden onslaught of some five to ten thousand tribesmen mounted on camels and horses, but it was difficult to take adequate precautions as there were no means of patrolling their obvious line of advance through the length of the great Wadi Sirhan, which begins east of Amman and runs in a south-easterly direction as far as Jauf in the heart of Saudi Arabia. The blow had been expected ever since the first raid two years previously, but it had not materialized, and the authorities, realizing that they could not remain in a permanent state of readiness to resist invasion, were beginning to hope that the Wahabis were going to overlook Trans-Jordan, when the onslaught came from out of the blue.

Peake was riding one morning before breakfast south of Amman when he met some women running towards him and screaming "Akhwan—Akhwan." The word Akhwan, which means "brothers" or "brotherhood," was the name adopted by the various tribes of the Wahabis who had combined together to spread the new form of the faith, and it was something of an anomaly as anything less brotherly than their treatment of neighbouring tribes outside the coalition remains to be imagined. Peake pulled up and asked them what had happened. They informed him that a big force of Wahabi camelry had descended on the village of Teneib, had killed most of the people, and were then moving on towards Amman.

Peake galloped off at once to the Royal Air Force headquarters at the aerodrome a short distance outside Amman, and on his way stopped for a moment at his own barracks to order every available man of the Legion to be mounted and ready to move. At the R.A.F. offices he explained the situation, asking for all the assistance they could give in the way of bombing aeroplanes and armoured cars.



Whilst the aeroplanes were being loaded up with a supply of bombs Peake got into a scouting plane and directed the pilot to fly in a southerly direction where the Wahabis were reported to be. Immediately they had reached a height of about two hundred feet they saw the invaders, and it was a most awe-inspiring sight, for the whole of the open plain below them was crowded with a dense mass of camel riders. A small party of them had halted to sack the farm of a Christian Arab about five miles from Amman, but the main body in clouds of dust extended on either side of the building on a front of several thousand yards. They were moving rapidly at the fast-swinging trot of the riding camel, the tassels of their saddle-bags and head halters swinging as they moved, and above the forest of rifle barrels could be seen waving the big red and green banners of the Akhwan.

There were still no signs of either the bombing aeroplanes or the armoured cars, and in a very short time the Wahabis at the rate they were travelling would be in Amman itself, which would not only mean a general massacre of all the inhabitants, but would put them in a position where neither the planes nor the cars could operate to advantage. Then to the north Peake and his pilot saw rapidly-moving columns of white dust, and the armoured cars came roaring down the road towards the advancing mass.

The tribesmen, however, were not on the road itself, but several hundred yards away to the east in very broken country where the cars could not operate with full freedom. The officer in command realized that with his tiny force he had not the slightest hope of success against the many thousands of well-armed Arabs unless he could get them into open country, where he could use his machine-guns to effect without the risk of becoming stuck in the sand or held up in some desert cul-de-sac where he could be surrounded.

At that moment the aeroplanes came over and dropped a line of bombs in the front ranks of the advancing camel men. The bombs exploded in clouds of dust, in which appeared the waving legs of fallen camels and the white-clad figures of wounded and dead men, and in a moment the long advancing line broke in confusion, turning inwards to offer a still more vulnerable target to the aeroplanes which were now swinging round for the next bombing swoop. When this came the whole mass turned and fled, their camels moving at a lumbering gallop, and with incredible folly, instead of going east into the broken country where the armoured cars could not follow them, they streamed across the vast Zizia plain, which is several miles long and being absolutely flat and smooth provides an ideal surface for cars.

Never in the short history of mechanization has an enemy played so effectively into the hands of an attacking force, nor offered such an extremely vulnerable target where the cars could operate with the greatest freedom. The perfectly smooth going made accurate aim with the machine-guns possible with every burst of firing and the four cars selecting their targets, here swung along the flank of a galloping column, raking their ranks with bullets; there one would swing off to break up a small party who were endeavouring to get away from the general rout, and in front a third would

cruise along in front of the mass, turning it back momentarily and increasing the confusion.

From his seat in the plane above Peake could watch every detail of the battle until, with every belt of ammunition expended, the four cars were compelled to give up the pursuit of the main body, and attend to the mopping up of small dismounted parties by rifle fire from the crews. At this stage the very disappointed cavalry of the Arab Legion appeared on the scene, having missed the first part of the battle, but they found there was still much to do, as isolated parties who had lost their camels were overcoming their terror and beginning to rally, and there were a vast number of prisoners and wounded to collect.

The armoured cars then returned to their barracks for a further supply of ammunition, and set out immediately to the east after the broken enemy, but the Wahabis had retreated with such incredible rapidity that the cars did not succeed in getting in touch with or even sighting them again. Where the Zizia plain ends the desert breaks up into steep rocky wadis and sharp escarpments and, taking advantage of folds in the ground, the Wahabis were making their way back to their own country where the story of their disastrous defeat spread among the Akhwan, who up to that time had imagined themselves invincible as the chosen people of Allah.

The plain after the battle presented an extraordinary sight, for it was strewn with dead and dying men and camels, and littered with saddles, saddlebags and rifles, including five Akhwan banners, beneath which the enemy had hoped to march in triumphantly to Amman. Their actual losses were five hundred killed and some six hundred prisoners, many of them wounded, and in addition to these losses the Wahabis carried off with them a number of casualties. This overwhelming defeat made Trans-Jordan's eastern and southern frontiers safe, and the ever-present menace of invasion was over, for never again in the lifetime of that generation were the Wahabi tribesmen going to try conclusion with the bombs of aeroplanes and the machine-gun fire of armoured cars.

The huge force had come in by way of the Wadi Sirhan, as was expected, and had passed right under the walls of Kaf, then held by a detachment of the Legion. This small party were quite unable to take any action against the invaders, who were themselves not going to be led away from their immediate objective—Amman and the person of the Emir Abdulla—whilst they subjugated a small fort. As the post at Kaf had not been provided with wireless, the Legionaries stationed there had no means of warning Amman of the army marching against it. Shortly after passing Kaf the Wahabis had met, unfortunately, a small convoy of the Arab Legion coming out from Amman with supplies for the outpost, and the eighteen men of the party were slaughtered to a man.

It has been hinted in some quarters that the Royal Air Force cars were more drastic in their operations against the Wahabis in this battle than was absolutely necessary, and that the casualties inflicted were excessive. Arm-chair critics hold the view that the object arrived at could have been achieved without the loss of so many lives. It must be remembered, however, that for some three years the inhabitants of Trans-Jordan had been living in a state of terror, for any day a fast-moving cloud of dust might mean

the advance of a large raiding party, and when the Wahabis attacked there was no mercy for man, woman and child. On the previous raid and the unprovoked attack on the railway men they had proved themselves blood-thirsty to a degree, and it was common knowledge that their intention was to put the whole of the inhabitants of Amman to the sword, and in particular to kill the Emir Abdulla. It was essential, therefore, when the opportunity presented itself that a lesson should be administered which would be remembered for all time and such casualties inflicted that never again would the wild Beduins of Central Arabia allow themselves to be led against a State which was endeavouring to arrive at a condition of peace and security ; but no one in Trans-Jordan in their most optimistic moments had hoped the Wahabis would stage such a unique opportunity for administering such a convincing lesson. In dealing with an aggressive and ruthless enemy it is advisable to take into account the treatment one would expect to receive if things had happened differently, with the enemy the victor. In this connection it is possibly a masterpiece of the obvious to state that, if Germany had won the war of 1914-18, we should not have been able to rise again in 1939, nor for that matter in 1989, but over the question of the Wahabi defeat in 1924 there is no occasion for regrets for lost opportunities.

The five banners captured from the Wahabis provided an amusing episode as, immediately after the battle, Peake obtained one as his share of the victory, and hung it up on the wall of his house in Amman. The Emir Abdulla had been attending the Pilgrimage to Mecca at the time of the Wahabi invasion, and when he returned the remaining four banners were presented to him, but nothing was said about the fifth. The Emir, however, knew that five had been taken and started inquiries about the missing flag, which ultimately took the form of a cross-examination of many people present at the battle. When things reached this stage, Peake thought it advisable to tell the Emir he had it, and this he did on the first occasion they were alone together.

"About that fifth Wahabi banner, Your Highness," he said. "I picked it up myself immediately after the battle and took it as my share of the spoils."

"That's quite all right," replied the Emir laughingly, "I knew you had it all the time, and I want you to keep it as I consider you have earned it."

#### CHAPTER XIV

### PETRA AND PERPLEXITIES

"Men are more easily governed through their vices than through their virtues." (*Napoleon's Maxims.*)

THE INVASION OF THE HEDJAZ IN 1925 BY THE WAHABIS UNDER KING ABDUL Aziz Ibn Saud, which resulted eventually in the capture of Mecca and Medina, caused King Hussein to retreat northwards and take refuge with

his few remaining followers in Akaba. Here some attempt was made to resist the invader by mobilizing the northern Hedjaz tribes, the Billi and Howietat, who had played a part in the early stages of the Revolt in the desert, but it became obvious that, despite many reiterations of their loyalty to the old regime and a desire to die "in the last ditch," these two erstwhile redoubtable tribes were not going to put up much resistance against the invincible *Akhwan* (brotherhood) who were carrying all before them. The old king, who had the same keen sense of humour as his son Abdulla, was able to see the amusing side of an otherwise most depressing situation and, when some sycophantic sheikh to prove his loyalty had said that if Hussein commanded him to throw himself out of the window he would willingly obey, the weary and disillusioned monarch replied sarcastically: "I should expect you to make a remark like this in a town where every building is of one story only."

Realizing that the situation was hopeless, Hussein abdicated in favour of his son Ali, who endeavoured to hold out in Jeddah, whilst Hussein remained at Akaba. As the successful advance of the Wahabi *Akhwan* continued the British Government intervened, took off King Hussein from Akaba in a gunboat, offering him a home in Cyprus, and then instructed the Emir Abdulla to occupy the Maan-Akaba area and garrison it, basing the claims to it on the fact that in Turkish days it had been a part of the vilayet of Damascus. King Ibn Saud, however, claimed it as part of the Kingdom of the Hedjaz, which was his by right of conquest, and the point was still in dispute up to the outbreak of the war, with the result that on the most recent maps the frontier between Trans-Jordan and the Hedjaz is not shown, though it is tacitly accepted, without prejudice, to run west to east from a point on the coast about two miles south of Akaba.

The claims to the ownership of the little insignificant port present a difficult legal problem. Immediately after the end of the last war the newly-created Arab State, with its capital at Damascus, maintained that both Maan and Akaba were portions of the old Turkish vilayet of Damascus. They appointed a Kaimakam in Maan, but at Akaba King Hussein just managed to get his representative in first and thus held the town as part of his kingdom. When the Damascus Arab State fell owing to the French mandate, and the ultimate position of Trans-Jordan had not been yet defined, King Hussein established his rule in Akaba and took over Maan also, and Great Britain, with so many difficult problems on hand, was content to leave it at that. Actually, in addition to Akaba, the Hedjaz Government took over with it the small strip of Palestine territory which intervenes between Trans-Jordan and the Egyptian province of Sinai, and this also Great Britain and the Palestine Government overlooked for the time being. When, however, the Hedjaz fell into the hands of another Power the situation became entirely different, and the British Government insisted on the old Syrian argument, maintaining that Akaba and the surrounding country was not a portion of the Hedjaz, and that the claims of the Hedjaz to it had never been recognized officially.

It may be thought that this small fishing port is hardly worth the disagreements it has caused, but its position at the head of the Gulf of Akaba suggests that some day and in some way it may be of the greatest strategical

value, but so far apparently it has not realized the great and important future anticipated by Eastern strategists.

The inclusion of the Maan vilayet in the Trans-Jordan State brought Petra and its neighbouring village of Wadi Musa within the administrative area of the Government, and this was a mixed blessing. In the first place it meant an annual influx of tourists and sightseers, a most inconsiderate and self-centred class, who regard all attempts to provide for their safety as stupid official interference, and who are the first to complain bitterly to their own Governments when their disobedience and foolishness land them in some unpleasant episode. If, on the other hand, "stupid official interference" has protected them effectively from thieves and bandits, they write books on their experiences with facetious remarks about the kindly official who has shepherded them through with safety. The presence of a recognized "sight," or place of antiquity, within one's territory constitutes an ever-present trial, source of annoyance, and distraction from one's ordinary duties. Not only are ordinary visitors constantly placing themselves in difficult positions from which they have to be extracted, but every "notable" who visits the Middle East on duty or pleasure has to be escorted to the "sight" at Government expense, and with the senior British official acting as dragoman. Almost all the States and provinces of the Middle East suffer from this drawback: Trans-Jordan has Petra, Sinai the Mountain of the Law, the Libyan Desert, Siwa, whilst Palestine has so many attractions that officials there have little time to spare for ordinary work.

Petra, which is described briefly in a previous chapter, is ideally situated from the point of view of the bandit, or bad man, as it lies in the crest of the mountains of Edom in wild, broken country. Whenever it is a question of police patrols and arrests the wanted men have a most convenient back-door, which leads down to the vast uninhabited Wadi Araba with its score of secluded hiding-places, where they can live in peace and security until such time as the coast is clear for another raid and hold-up.

There are about three thousand people living in Petra itself and in the adjoining village of Wadi Musa, and, though they may have some of the blood of the old Nabatteans in their veins, the accepted view is that they are descended from a Jewish settlement which was living in this part of the world in the days of the Prophet Mahommed. They were then a sufficiently large and important community to have their tribute assessed by the Moslems at one hundred and twenty-five golden dinars, plus a quarter of all their produce. They are to-day commonly known locally as the Lyathna, in other words, the "Lions of Judah."

These Lyathna have been for generations a most lawless wild people, as during the Turkish regime they were considered more trouble than they were worth, and, provided they did not interfere with the well-being of the more civilized areas around Maan to the east and Shobek to the north, they were left very much to their own devices, and were not taxed in any way. Once their area was included within the Trans-Jordan frontiers steps had to be taken to bring them into line with every other community, as in the East exceptions to the rule cannot be made, for they constitute the insertion of the thin end of the wedge which will open up and disintegrate the whole. Perhaps it would be more exact to say exceptions

cannot be made when the control is British with its reputation for equity and justice, because, during the Turkish occupation, such exceptions were recognized and nobody seemed to expect anything else, realizing that it was a simple and Oriental method of solving or shelving a difficult position.

The first step to be taken at Wadi Musa was the establishment of a small police post in the village and, though the Lyathna were sullen and mutinous, the situation was quiet for a time. Possibly, if the people had been treated firmly, but with politeness and consideration, control might have been instituted without much trouble, but unfortunately the Kaimakam of Maan was deficient in tact and the police aggressive. The Kaimakam had announced briefly that a road was to be made to the village and a police post with telephone line installed immediately, and these portents of Government control with all that control implies should have been introduced more gradually, and the unpleasant news broken to the Lyathna gently. The result of this bald announcement was that the inhabitants of Wadi Musa drove the police out of the village, and burnt the police post.

On hearing of this outbreak, Peake went down to Maan to see the Kaimakam and to endeavour to devise some method of solving the difficulty without resort to arms and the resulting loss of life. In the Arab world an unpleasant situation such as this can be usually cleared up if tact and patience are employed, and both parties—Government officials and recalcitrant tribesmen—will in the future laugh over the past disagreement and regard it as a pleasant episode. If, on the other hand, blood is shed resentment will smoulder for a generation or more.

Peake's last visit to Petra had been made in 1921 when the Milner Commission was in the Middle East, and he was asked by Lord Samuel if he could take Lord and Lady Milner to see the old Nabattee town. As Petra in those days was within the Hedjaz Kingdom, and there was practically no Government functioning there or elsewhere, he replied that there was a risk of trouble, but he thought if he took sufficient men with him that all would be well. So the party set off with Peake's right-hand man and Chief Staff Officer, Abdul Kader el Guindi, commanding the troops. Abdul Kader el Guindi had been a cavalry officer in the Turkish Army and had fought with the Turks during the war until the fall of Damascus. During the hostilities in Sinai and Palestine he had served with distinction, and he was the officer commanding a small party of Turks and Arabs who had dragged an enormous mine across the desert on a sledge, managing to get through our line of outposts in Sinai and finally arriving on the banks of the Suez Canal north of Kantara. Here the activity of our patrols prevented them from placing the mine in the Canal for the benefit of our shipping as they had intended, and the party, after waiting for an opportunity for two days, eventually buried it in the sand with a view to returning later to put it in the water. This opportunity never arose, and the mine no doubt remains still buried on the east bank of the Canal.

The party arrived at Petra in the evening, and the visit being quite unexpected there were very few people about. In about an hour's time however, the Lyathna with their various sheikhs began to collect, and Abdul Kader sent a young Circassian officer to find out how the land lay. He

came back and reported that there were some dozen sheikhs and headmen present, who wished to see the Pasha, and that they were in a nasty frame of mind. The situation was tense and anything might cause it to flare up. It was all very unfortunate as an unpleasant episode necessitating a police action is always regrettable, but it amounts to a disaster if it should occur on the occasion when a senior Foreign Office representative is making an official tour with the object of reporting on the state of governments generally, and more particularly on the efficiency and suitability of the various British officials functioning in these Governments. If the average Briton is alive to the peculiar significance of such a situation the Arab official is even more keenly aware of it, and Abdul Kader rose to the occasion.

As an Arab he knew that in a village like Petra and Wadi Musa there was certain to be considerable latent hostility and internal jealousy between the sheikhs as to their respective positions in the town. There is hardly a village east of Suez where the inhabitants are not divided up into two or three families between whom some ancient blood feud exists, and though they can always sink their differences in the face of a common enemy it requires only some untoward event to cause the old enmity to blaze out with violence.

Abdul Kader arranged for an audience in a large cave in Petra and he set out three chairs for Peake, himself and the Circassian officer, and facing them a few boxes and camel saddles as seats for the twelve sheikhs. With considerable cunning he placed improvised seating accommodation for six only, which would raise the terrible thorny problem of social superiority and the question of who should be seated during the coming interview, and who should constitute the "Lower Ten," as it were, and stand. There is in the Arab world a very great significance over the question of standing or sitting during an interview, and to hold a conversation with a sheikh or notable without offering him a seat not only amounts to a deliberate slight but is considered to be an indication that he is regarded as a common "hewer of wood and drawer of water." The Arab world is democratic, but it is a very peculiar democracy where punctilious respect, almost servility, is shown to the great and the holders of official positions.

Everything turned out as Abdul Kader expected. The assembled sheikhs came in, looking savage and sullen, and Abdul Kader asked them what they desired. They replied they had come to see Peake Pasha as they had complaints to make and much to say.

"Good," said Abdul Kader genially. "Here is the Pasha himself, and he will hear you. *Tiffadl* (sit down)," and he waved his hand to the boxes.

The recognized thing in the Arab world when two men of more or less equal position are about to sit down, or to leave the room, is for both to bow politely to the other and say "*tiffadl*," which in this sense means, "after you, sir," but it is merely a verbal gesture of politeness. The one thing paramount in the minds of both is that they are not going to allow the other fellow to take precedence, and, having said *tiffadl* with every courtesy, they will at the last moment push their way in front and thus establish seniority—or, at any rate, seniority until the next test of eminence arises.

Immediately the sheikhs were asked to seat themselves there was the usual chorus of "*tiffadls*", with rustling of robes and clanking of swords, and on this occasion as their mood was pugnacious the veneer of politeness one to the other wore out very quickly. At each of the six chairs there were two sheikhs bowing like pouter pigeons, but glaring at each other with hostile eyes, and in a moment a number of voluble arguments had started.

"*Tiffadl*," cried Abdul Kader, waving his hand impatiently. "*Tiffadl*, *ya mishaikh* (you sheikhs), the Pasha is waiting to hear you."

These words put the finishing touches to the scene, and in a moment there were half a dozen violent rows in progress with the opponents shrieking out vituperation and recalling past misdeeds and grievances.

Then Abdul Kader pretended to lose his temper. "Get out of the Pasha's presence," he said fiercely. "You come here to see him with what you say is a general complaint and you are not even agreed among yourselves. You insult the Pasha by squabbling and arguing over private matters in his presence. Get out all of you and come back only when you have made up your minds on what you want to talk about. *Illa!*" ("Get out!")

After this carefully staged distraction the visit to Petra was made in the most pleasant and peaceful circumstances, for the notables of the village were far too concerned with their private hostilities to worry about the presence of strangers within their midst.

On Peake's arrival at Maan following the burning of the police post he found the Kaimakam of the area taking a very gloomy view of the situation, maintaining that it would take at least one thousand men to subdue the inhabitants of Wadi Musa. On learning that Peake proposed to go there himself the following day he was amazed, but on hearing that he himself was to make one of the party his amazement turned to alarm, and he invented every excuse to avoid the visit.

The following morning Peake found drawn up outside the Maan Government one hundred and twenty Legionary cavalry and camelry and about fifty infantrymen in cars, the Kaimakam having gleaned every available man from the neighbouring posts to form an imposing expeditionary force—Peake, however, realized that to try and enter the valley with a body of armed men would be merely to precipitate disaster, and he was resolved to try negotiation and reconciliation first. He told the assembled army to "fall out" and announced he would go to Wadi Musa with three men only, and, on hearing that he was to make one of the party, the unfortunate Kaimakam nearly fell off his horse with consternation.

The small party moved off and were allowed to enter the village without obstruction, though the heads of armed tribesmen could be seen peering over the rocks all down the narrow valley. In the village itself a large tent had been pitched, and here all the headmen, and as many of the population as could squeeze in, assembled for the negotiations. Hours of talk followed, but every time Peake mentioned the steps the Government proposed to take there were angry murmurs from in front and loud shouts of rage from behind. Lunch was served and after the meal the discussion continued, but apparently though "every avenue was explored no possible



formula acceptable to both parties could be found," and the attitude of the crowd was fast becoming menacing.

At the critical moment when the heat of the discussion had reached its height, Abdul Kader, the hero of the previous Wadi Musa episode, who was one of the party with Peake, suddenly turned to one of the most vociferous of the Lyathna—a stunted, toothless old man, whose face bore little or no resemblance to that of a human being, and said: "*Mubayyin min wijhak rajil tayyib*" (It is plain from your face that you are a good man).

Everybody in the tent turned to look at the man, and when they saw his face the remark struck as being so incongruous that the whole assembly burst into a crash of laughter. On this happy note, as darkness was drawing on, the meeting broke up, but no decision had been reached and the situation was as bad as before, except that Abdul Kader had "got a laugh."

As the small party rode through the narrow streets of the village on their way back to Maan the tribesmen stood on the flat roofs of the houses yelling defiance and shouting: "We won't have your road, or your telephone, or police," to which Peake shouted in reply: "You shall have my road, my telephone and my police." As Peake says, the ride through the village, which in view of the menacing attitude of the people was done at a slow walk, constituted a very tense and nerve-racking ten minutes, as anything might have caused a sudden fusillade of shots and the murder of the whole party, but he considers that Abdul Kader's humorous remark lent just that touch of good humour to the impasse to save the situation.

Negotiations having failed there was nothing for it but to employ force, and five hundred men from Amman were put on the train and sent to Maan. In those days the most negotiable of the tracks into Petra was that from the north on the Shobek road, and Peake, guessing that the tribesmen would expect him to come this way, made ostensible preparations for the march the following morning to take this route. This had the required effect and, on learning that most of the Lyathna had moved out to the north to resist the column from the hills commanding the road, he marched quickly by night and arrived at the top of the rise overlooking the village of Wadi Musa just as day was breaking.

There were a few scattered shots from the village, but these were quickly silenced by a volley from the Legionaries on the heights. Peake then saw several mounted men galloping away from the village in a northerly direction, who were obviously going to recall the tribesmen who were watching the Shobek road. It was obvious, therefore, that there would be some fighting and loss of life before the Lyathna would see reason. At this moment Peake noticed that the crops of barley and wheat around the village were just beginning to ripen and, keeping his infantry and machine-guns in their commanding positions on the ridge, he sent the cavalry down to the valley and told them to start grazing their horses, some three hundred and fifty in number, on the corn.

Immediately the villagers saw this, and realized that in a very short time their year's supply of wheat and barley would be destroyed, they sent a delegation out to parley with Peake, but he refused to deal with anyone unless the head sheikhs met him in person. After a short delay, during

which the horses remained in the crops, the sheikhs came out to surrender, and the whole party were sent off to Amman to interview Rikabi Pasha, the Prime Minister. During their short absence in the capital and, whilst they were in the position of being hostages for good behaviour and peace, Peake took advantage of the situation to start construction on the road immediately, the telephone was installed, and a large police post was maintained at the top of the hill to dominate the whole valley. The rebellion was now over without loss of life, and soon after the construction of the road tourists started to flock into Petra, whilst Thomas Cook & Son established a tent hotel in the centre of the ancient town. In a very short time the Lyathna were delighted with the road, for they supplied the resulting tourists with ponies and donkeys on which to ride into Petra and, after the manner of all inhabitants of an area in which there are antiquarian ruins, they overcharged the visitors to their hearts' content and sold them spurious antiquities at fantastic prices. These previously isolated and primitive people grasped all the possibilities of tourist exploitation in a very short time, and after the lapse of ten short years it is doubtful if even the famous rapacious guides of Cairo Pyramids could have taught them anything they had not already grasped by intuition.

The next time Peake visited Petra he saw in the wildest part of the gorge leading down to the *sik* one or two heads bob up over the rocks and caught a glimpse of men scurrying away. He asked the sheikh of the village who were these phantoms that ran like gazelle, and the sheikh said they were a very wild, primitive people, called the Badul. They were naked except for the skins of animals and, as they were extremely shy and could run very fast, no one had very much to do with them. Peake said he would very much like to meet one; but the sheikh said it would be impossible as nothing would induce them to come in and meet a member of the Government. As no Badul was produced for him to see he sent out some of his mounted men and, after a long chase, one of the wild people was caught and brought in. As the sheikh had said the man was quite naked except for a hyaena skin, and he was very wild and frightened. Peake kept him in the village for three days, fed him extremely well, and eventually overcame his shyness and won his confidence. The Badul are now becoming gregarious, and are willing to come into the village to meet tourists and amuse them by exhibitions of dancing. Like so many of these very small tribes there is some mystery about their origin, and, as with the people of Wadi Musa, it is believed that they are descended from the Jews of pre-Arab invasion times, but both they and their cousins, the Lyathna of Wadi Musa, are now Mahomedans, though in the case of the primitive Baduls they cannot be regarded as regular communicants exactly.

## CHAPTER XV

## MAJOR GLUBB AND THE BEDUIN PEACE

"The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid." (*Isaiah.*)

IN 1930, AS THE RESULT OF CONSTANT INTER-TRIBAL RAIDING ALL ALONG THE eastern and southern frontiers of Trans-Jordan, where the Beduin tribes were taking full advantage of the fact that there were two Governments, with not entirely harmonious views, functioning on their old grazing and battle grounds, Peake applied for additional help. His own time was very fully occupied training the Legion and maintaining peace in the villages and settled areas, and already he had been given the services of Major Northfield, who was in charge of the Depot and the prison service; but some special officer was required for the settlement of the desert frontier areas.

The officer selected for this work was Major J. B. Glubb, O.B.E., M.C., who since the last war had been serving in the Irak political service and had achieved outstanding success in making peace between Beduin tribes along the western borders of that country. Here, as in Trans-Jordan, the old feud between Ibn Saud and the Hashimite family had made itself felt and the personal animosity between the late King Feisal of Irak and the King of Saudi-Arabia did not improve matters. It was for this reason that an Englishman, with no ties to either family, could settle quarrels without any suspicion of personal bias far more easily than an official of Arab birth. In a few years Glubb had made peace all along the Irak frontier, and was therefore selected by the British Government for service as second-in-command of the Arab Legion and to be responsible under Peake's supervision for the settlement of all the feuds among the tribes on the south and east of Trans-Jordan.

Glubb, who is most popular among the Beduin folk because of his capacity, if not his predilection, for living as they do, is known to every tribesman as Abu Henaik. *Henaik* means jaw and the name was given to him because during the last war he sustained a wound in the face that has left a prominent scar on one side. *Abu* means father and is used by the Arabs to call attention to any marked feature: for instance, a fox is called *Abu makar*, the father of cunning; the crab, *Abu maqass*, the father of scissors; the cat-fish, *Abu shanab*, the father of whiskers; whilst an exceedingly verbose Egyptian politician was known as *Abu Kalaam Effendi*, Father of Talk, Esquire.

In the Beduin world the bestowal of a nickname is a compliment and a mark of esteem and affection, as it is with us. If a subaltern joins his regiment, and has not been christened with some opprobrious epithet in the first year of his service, it is fairly considerable proof that he is not particularly popular in his unit.

Glubb has probably a better knowledge of spoken Arabic than any Englishman living to-day. The word "spoken" is used advisedly as there is the classical written Arabic taught at our universities, and there may



LIAISON BETWEEN TRANS-JORDAN, SINAI AND EGYPT. CHRISTMAS LUNCH ON FAROAN ISLAND, GULF OF AKABA  
*Names (from right to left) : General Sir Frederick Pile, Bt., now Anti-Aircraft Command, Mrs. Jarvis, Lady Pile,  
Peake Pasha, Major Glubb.*



PEAKE PASHA AND MRS. PEAKE AT JORDAN'S SOURCE

possibly be students from these and other colleges who can write and read the language better, but who would be quite unable to carry on a modern conversation with any Arab or Egyptian, far less try an intricate law-suit. Glubb can both read and write the language with ease, but his great proficiency lies in his ability to speak it fluently and grammatically with a considerable knowledge of local Beduin words and phrases. The great difficulty with Arabic is that sentences are constructed entirely differently from our own, and it requires more than knowledge and learning—something in the nature of a gift—to be able to speak the language as an Arab speaks it. The majority of Englishmen who serve in the Middle East construct their sentences on the English principle and this little peculiarity, which is known as “Bimbashi Arabic”, is recognized and pandered to by those who come in close contact with these officials, but such ungrammatical language is not easily understood by the desert Beduin.

Not only has Glubb a first-class knowledge of the Arabic language, both written and spoken, but he is an expert on Beduin law and tribal customs and the difference between studying law in this country and in Arabia is that in England one has an unlimited supply of text-books on the subject, and the laws of the land are printed at great length; in Arabia, on the other hand, nothing is written or printed, and the laws exist only in the memories of the sheikhs of the tribes and legal experts or tribal *qadis*. To obtain a knowledge of these laws one must serve an apprenticeship in Beduin courts, hearing the evidence in various cases, noting the judgments and paying particular attention to the punishments, or to be more exact damages, for in the Beduin world few acts are regarded as actual crimes, but more or less as infringements of the laws governing tribal security and are met by the award of damages. That is to say, if one Beduin kills another in a fair fight, or an unfair one in which he has taken advantage of surprise, the actual details of the killing are not taken into account and he is not regarded as a murderer, but as a man who has unlawfully deprived another tribe of one of its strength. For this he must pay the prescribed damages for robbing another community of a life, but the question of his punishment as a murderer does not arise.

Beduin law differs in almost every respect from all European laws, and in our eyes savours of injustice, as the innocent suffer for the acts of the guilty, but after one has studied it for some time it appears to be in the main perfectly sound and admirably suited to desert nomads, who are here to-day and gone to-morrow. In Great Britain it is quite simple to enforce our laws, as if the offender has any property—a house, land, securities, animals or a banking account—the police take steps to estreat that property, and if the offender is a criminal there are records, histories and fingerprints to assist in his detection and arrest, and practically every member of the population will help the police to effect his capture. There is, of course, nothing of the sort in the Beduin world and the ordinary laws by which settled populations are governed cannot be applied to a people who can pack up their tents and move thirty miles in a day, who possess no immovable property, and who are systematically against the Government and against its police.

Another factor that makes the application of ordinary law almost

impossible is the old Beduin custom of a wanted man seeking sanctuary among his enemies. According to the laws of desert hospitality, if a wanted man goes to the tents of a tribe with whom his own tribe have a blood feud they are bound to offer him food and drink, and having eaten "bread and salt" of his enemies they must harbour him and protect him from arrest. Occasionally cases have occurred where this old custom has been disregarded because of the bitterness of the hatred between the tribes, the fugitive has been refused "bread and salt," an act which is tantamount to a death sentence, and he has been killed ; but such cases are rare and constitute a black mark against the erring tribe.

Briefly, Beduin law consists in holding the tribe responsible for the acts of the individual, whether the offences happen to be killings, raids on animals, insults or adultery. Many of these acts take place within the tribe itself and both the culprit and the offended party may be of the same section. In these cases the hearing of the evidence and infliction of the damages may be settled by the sheikh, with sometimes two sheikhs from neighbouring tribes to act as neutral assessors. The natural reaction of the Beduin when an offence has been committed is to retaliate, on the principle of "a life for a life and an eye for an eye." If a member of his tribe has been killed he takes steps to kill the murderer or, if the murderer himself is not available, to kill one of his relatives ; if a raid has been made he retaliates with a view to regaining his own property together with some of his enemy's animals, but this method of settling accounts leads to such insecurity of life that the sheikhs try when possible to hear cases in courts and apply their desert law. The weak spot in Beduin law is that, though the hearings are almost invariably fair and the judgments usually sound, there are no means of enforcing the payment of fines and blood money, and it is the exception rather than the rule for a tribe to pay up on the date appointed the number of animals—for camels and sheep are the normal currency of the courts—they have been ordered to hand over. The direct result of this is that the trouble breaks out again and, at the next sitting, the Court has not only to deal with the original case, which has not been settled owing to the damages not being paid, but an additional one caused by this slackness, or rather deliberate flouting of their own laws.

In Trans-Jordan prior to Major Glubb's arrival the Beduin courts had been presided over by the Emir Shahr, a cousin of the Emir Abdulla, and an expert on Beduin law, with Peake sitting as a member to advise on police matters, and to give also an unbiassed account of the matter in those cases where he had come in actual contact with the disputants. The writer attended several Arab courts presided over by this very able Emir and was impressed by his quick appreciation of the salient points in every case, his freedom from bias, and the soundness of his judgments. The cases in question were those where the small Sinai tribes had suffered from the raids of their more powerful neighbours in Trans-Jordan and Saudi-Arabia, and though the Emir Shahr had no relationship with Sinai, but with both Trans-Jordan and Saudi-Arabia, his summings-up and findings were invariably in favour of the Sinaitic people. Unfortunately, however, the fines were seldom paid by the Trans-Jordan people, and never by the Saudi-Arabians.

On the eastern and southern borders of Trans-Jordan big raids were constantly taking place—the Saudi-Arabian tribes making incursions into Trans-Jordan, and the Trans-Jordan people retaliating. King Ibn Saud complained strongly to our Foreign Office whenever his people were the sufferers and demanded full compensation, but when the boot was on the other foot, and the Trans-Jordan Government protested, no satisfaction could be obtained. The explanation of this was that distances are great and communications poor in Saudi-Arabia and, though the Government in Mecca heard at once every detail, together with a considerable amount of exaggeration, about raids made by Trans-Jordan Arabs, they were never informed when a raid by their own Beduin took place and it was not easy to make inquiries and arrive at facts. The result of this was that Beduin law was working most unfairly, as the Trans-Jordan people were compelled to pay at once the full settlement for their own misdeeds, but never obtained any satisfaction or compensation for those of the tribes of Saudi-Arabia.

It was Major Glubb's task to inquire into all these frontier tribal disputes and to arrive at some settlement which would operate fairly with both parties. For this work he was admirably suited, as not only was he an expert in Beduin affairs, but he possessed the ability to see things from the Beduin standpoint, and few Britons can do this—or if they do the tendency is to lose their English outlook entirely and with it so many attributes of the British character.

The main Arab court continued to sit in Amman for internal cases, but the tribal matters on the borders became Glubb's work and, to help him enforce his judgments, a further one hundred and fifty men were enlisted for the Arab Legion, and these men, as they had to operate among the Beduin only, were obtained from the local tribes. Their uniform was most picturesque and striking, for they wore a long brown woollen *abaya* (cloak) adorned with braid, and under it a white calico shirt with enormously long sleeves, which extended far beyond the sleeves of the *abaya* and literally trailed upon the ground. Such sleeves are a mark of social eminence in the Arab world and carry the same weight, and serve the same useful purpose, as does the grey top-hat of Ascot and official garden parties in our world, the only difference being that we do not adopt the grey top-hat as part of our everyday working kit. However, as a solitary policeman on patrol in a wild desert land is a representative of the Government it is necessary to provide him with marks of office to impress the nomads with his importance and power, and in this respect ultra-long sleeves carry quite as much weight as does a strip of red carpet in European circles.

On their heads the men of this camel patrol wear a red and white Arab shawl held in position by the *agal*—the black cord of goat's-hair. The kit is completed by a pair of leather sandals and two bandoliers full of ammunition worn crosswise over their shoulders, while under their *abayas* they affect a leather belt in which a decorated dagger is stuck. They are certainly the most picturesque body of men in the Middle East, and when the tourists are on the Petra run during the winter the Beduin patrol are photographed from daybreak to dusk.

When Glubb arrived on the south-east frontiers he found some most



involved and difficult cases to settle ; some of them ordinary blood-feuds, some concerning grazing and watering rights, and some due to mutual raids. None of them was easy to understand and all were most difficult to settle, particularly those which concerned tribes on either side of the Trans-Jordan-Saudi-Arabian frontier. This division of the desert was a totally new arrangement, but the Beduin had at once grasped the fact that a frontier can be a most useful thing to the malefactor, as a punitive patrol chasing raiders must not cross it, whereas the raiders can.

Most of the cases were tried in the desert at the encampments of one or other of the opposing tribes, but preferably that of a neutral ; and as courts and lawsuits are the salt of the Beduin's life there was never any difficulty in obtaining the service of neutrals, either as hosts, or to provide sheikhs to act as assessors. The only trouble was that nobody—complainants, defendants, assessors or witnesses—could ever understand that time had any significance, or that a busy British official might possibly have other work to perform besides their special cases. This meant interminable and irritating delays before all the principals were assembled and several valuable days and sometimes weeks wasted before the courts could assemble. Glubb, however, has the gift of patience to a marked degree, and understanding the age-old dilatoriness of the Beduin did not allow their haphazard methods to ruffle his temper.

In a Beduin court a certain amount of latitude is permitted, and it is quite in order when damaging evidence is being given for the other side to interrupt and endeavour to refute it—in fact, the louder the protestations the greater the truth—but there are limits to these demonstrations, and both sides realize that some attempt is being made to settle an age-old dispute and restrain their feelings. On one occasion, however, there was a very bad lapse as, while the court was endeavouring to settle a long-standing blood feud in the tent of one of the parties concerned, a Beduin from the opposing side suddenly rushed in and shot dead the sheikh of the other tribe. The case was being heard after sunset, and in the darkness and confusion the murderer escaped and was never captured. The episode caused great excitement, as this flagrant breach of the laws governing the conduct of Beduin cases shocked everyone, and it was only through personal influence that Glubb prevented savage reprisals. The case was eventually settled, but the tribe of the murderer paid heavily for the crime, as the penalty for a killing committed when a tribe has agreed to a *sulh* (armistice) pending the hearing of a case is five times that inflicted in normal circumstances.

To assist in the work of peace-making along the frontiers Glubb used to entertain, and was entertained by, the Arab Kaimakams or Governors of Saudi-Arabia. On one occasion a particularly important Governor from the very heart of Arabia was to be the guest, and an impressive reception was arranged, with the usual Arab lunch in a highly-decorated tent. Peake flew down in his aeroplane to be present at this reception on account of its special significance, and he and Glubb discussed the topics they should talk about during lunch. They decided that camels, date-palms and Beduin tribal customs would be most suitable so brushed up their knowledge about camels and the record rides performed by well-known Arabs ; obtained some exclusive information about date cultivation, the method of propaga-

tion and the keeping qualities of the many varieties ; and recalled a few facts about Trans-Jordan folk-lore.

The Arab Governor, however, who had come from an oasis about five hundred miles away from the nearest railway or town of any importance, did not arrive on a magnificent fast-trotting camel as expected, but came in a cloud of dust seated in the back seat of a very large American car of the latest model. He was wearing correct Arab kit with *kufaiyeh* and *abaya*, but slung over his shoulder was the newest thing in reflex cameras. Having scanned the sky to see if the sun was obscured by cloud or haze, he set the stop for the aperture and proceeded to take photographs of Peake, Glubb, the aeroplane, and the Arab Legion and their cars.

When he had finished two spools of films he allowed himself to be shown to the reception tent where with the coffee the first question he asked was : "Can you tell me what has happened in Japan?"

Peake and Glubb, much amazed, had to admit they knew nothing about Japan, and had heard no recent news.

"It's just come through on the wireless," said the Arab sheikh ; "I switched on the radio set in the car as I was coming here, and heard that the Government had fallen and that a new Cabinet had been formed. I thought you would know something about it."

During lunch the sheikh proved he had no desire whatsoever to talk of the Arab world, as he was interested only in foreign countries, their affairs and their Governments. He asked searching questions, particularly about French cabinets, and as no ordinary Englishman has even begun to understand French politics both Peake and Glubb failed lamentably. For the last fifteen years they had been studying Arab matters and Arab life, to the exclusion of almost everything else, and probably the sheikh could not have found two Englishmen who knew less of the subjects on which he required first-hand information. Their store of knowledge on Arab affairs, which they had imagined would interest a Beduin from an oasis in the heart of Arabia, was quite wasted, as this scion of a noble tribe from the desert was far more interested in European matters, the latest thing in wireless sets, and synchronized mesh gears in motor-cars.

The arrival of the motor-car in the deserts of the Beduin nomad dates back only some ten to fifteen years, but it has already done much to alter the entire life and general outlook of this primitive people ; and the word primitive in this case conveys, not barbarism, but merely a desire to live the life their forefathers led in the eleventh century. For some thousands of years they have existed and been the paramount power in Arabia because they owned the finest and fastest camels ; not only did the possession of these camels make them invincible in small wars, but also they were their means of livelihood. The camel caravan guarded by Beduin brought in the produce from the oases to the coast, and supplied them in turn with the manufactured goods ; they took the pilgrims in tens of thousands from all parts of the Mahommedan world to the Holy City of Mecca ; and every traveller or merchant who wished to go into the desert hired his riding and baggage camels from the local Beduin and employed the sheikh to provide an escort. The car and the light lorry have altered all this, for in almost every part of Arabia where there is much trade the produce

is carried now by means of lorries ; travellers and merchants journey by car ; there are even omnibus services between the larger towns ; taxis ply for hire in every big centre ; whilst the pilgrim who goes to Mecca by camel is as rare as a man driving a tandem dog-cart in this country.

The advent of the motor-car, therefore, has not only affected the Beduin's position as an invincible fighting man in the deserts, but is also depriving him steadily of his means of livelihood. The demand for camels—especially the breedy, fast-trotting type—is not so good as it was ; the carrying trade is gone for all time in many parts of Arabia ; and the ease with which an efficient Government can protect a trade or pilgrim route by means of patrol cars and the telephone has obviated the necessity for paying a yearly *surra*, or subsidy, to the local sheikhs for the maintenance of good behaviour.

The last impact on Beduin tribal life occurred in the seventeenth or eighteenth century when firearms found their way to the Middle East and the Arab archers, famous for the accuracy and rapidity with which they could use the bow, found themselves faced with arms of precision. In a very short time, however, they adapted themselves to the new weapon, long flintlock rifles were made in Damascus and Baghdad, and the Beduin became as proficient in the use of firearms as he had been previously with the bow and arrow. In fact, the advent of the rifle suited his particular form of mobile warfare, where lightning strokes by fast-moving columns obviated the necessity for hand-to-hand combat.

Whether the Beduin mode of life will manage to survive the penetration of the motor vehicle, however, is a doubtful question, because by no stretch of the imagination can one foresee modern car factories springing up in the desert, nor the Beduin becoming an engineering expert. He is a camel- and a horse-master, and he has proved that he can raise the finest animals in the world, but it is impossible for him to compete with his settled neighbours now that mechanization has come to Arabia.

To draw a parallel case, the Beduin folk may be likened to an island nation, who were expert builders of wooden ships and who maintained a paramount fleet in the days of the sailing vessel, but who are now faced by other nations possessing modern warships made of steel and propelled by steam and internal combustion engines.

In the more or less recently-formed Beduin car patrols Arab tribesmen have become efficient drivers and are capable of carrying out wayside repairs, but it is still a matter for doubt whether the desert Beduin could ever reconcile himself to day in and day out work in a garage, or make himself a slave to the mass production bench. Therefore, though the Beduin might use the car in place of the camel for his old-time raids on civilization, he could never become a producer of cars as he is of camels, and his activities could always be checked by withholding from him spare parts, covers and petrol.

These car patrols, formed during Peake's time and afterwards increased in size, have done extremely good work and have shown their fighting qualities under Major Glubb in the recent Irak rising and on the French Syrian borders during the occupation of that country by our forces. For these services Major Glubb, who was once reported from German sources

as being killed, has received the D.S.O., and in the official description of this award he is described as being "a bonny fechter," which suggests at least that he and his Beduin force lived up to all the traditions of the desert fighting stock.

CHAPTER XVI

"THE CLOUD IS COMING"

"The web of our life is of a mingled yarn, good and ill together." (*Shakespeare.*)

IN THE AUTUMN OF 1925 THE STATE OF INCIPIENT REVOLT IN SYRIA CHANGED to one of open rebellion when the Druses of the Lebanon and Hauran rose against the French Government. The Druses are a mysterious race with a mysterious religion, and there is a considerable amount of doubt as to both their own origin and that of their faith. The fact that they are, as compared with the local Arabs, a strongly-built, tall and light-complexioned people caused the belief at one time that they were descended from the Crusaders, but this theory was exploded when it was discovered that the Druses were in existence long before the date of the First Crusade. Their religion is monotheistic, and resembles the Mahommedan Faith sufficiently for them to read the Koran, but in the past they have been subjected to persecution by both the Arabs and Turks. As mountain dwellers they are a hardy, fearless race, and when, as the result of Sarraïl's harsh administration, they rose against the French, they proved to be very formidable opponents. The greater part of the Arab population in southern Syria rose with them, and the rebellion reached very serious proportions. Two punitive columns of all arms sent against them by the French were defeated with very heavy casualties and the loss of guns near Suwaida—the first column being practically wiped out—and the rebels eventually reached Damascus where they occupied the suburbs and surrounding country, though they did not obtain a footing in the city itself, except in the market.

To cope with this rising the French mobilized the local Circassians and Armenians, forming them into guerilla bands to wage war on Druse villages, and this had immediate repercussions in northern Trans-Jordan, where sympathy with the Druses took the form of reprisals against the Circassian villages in that country. This necessitated increased police patrols in all the Circassian centres north of Amman to protect the people from the Arab population, and meanwhile every man that could be spared was required to patrol the Syrian frontier where as usual the rebels were using Trans-Jordan as an area in which to recuperate, re-arm and re-organize. Eventually Azrak, in the Wadi Sirhan, was selected as a headquarters and a base camp for the Syrian rebels, and in this normally deserted and rather malarious oasis a small township with shops and temporary hospitals for wounded sprang up. Azrak is the most important of all the watering-places in the Wadi Sirhan; it lies some fifty-five miles east of Amman and, as

will be remembered, it served as Lawrence's headquarters when he was organizing his forces for the attack on the Turkish eastern communications immediately before the big push on the Palestinian plains. Its strategical importance has been recognized from the earliest days, for it contains the ruins of a fort built near one of the big fresh-water lakes by the Romans, and in those days it was a strong point in their Outer Limes or defences, behind which the regular Legions and friendly Beduin could rally. The existing fort is of more recent construction, but the original building dates back at least to A.D. 300, when Roman control was being established thoroughly in Trans-Jordan.

The Government could not plead ignorance of the fact that their country was being used openly for operations against the French seeing that a base headquarters existed within a day's march of the capital, but Peake was quite unable to get either his own Ministry or the Palestine Government to appreciate the danger of the situation. His Arab Legion at that time was in process of reduction in view of the arrival of the Trans-Jordan Frontier Force, late of Palestine, but as might have been expected the reduction of the Legionary forces was in full swing with a concomitant loss of general efficiency, whereas the Trans-Jordan Frontier Force had failed to arrive. When eventually the Frontier Force did materialize they were sent at once to Azrak, whereupon the rebel base camp broke up and the place was denied to any further war-weary Syrians.

For this situation in northern Trans-Jordan in general, and Azrak in particular, the French blamed Peake entirely and whole-heartedly, holding the view that not only was he openly assisting the rebels, but even that he had fomented the rising in the first place. It was at this time that the attack on him in *Le Matin*, mentioned in a previous chapter, was made and the hostility and suspicion continued until the arrival of General Weygand towards the latter part of Peake's service. This French administrator immediately on his arrival in Syria invited Peake over to see him and informed him that he did not believe one word of the various stories told against him (Peake) by his compatriots and predecessors. Weygand's experience of administration and constructive work in the French Colonial Empire had given him a far clearer insight into the habits of the Oriental than any of the previous High Commissioners had possessed, and he was able to appraise the situation at its true value. Under Weygand's wise administration, after the revolt, the State of Syria experienced peace and prosperity for the first time since the conclusion of the four years' war, and he won the respect of its people in a remarkably short time, considering the unhappy and unsettled condition of the country when first he took over his appointment.

In the very early days of his service Peake had carried out his work of inspection mainly by horse or camel and then, as road communications improved, he acquired a Model T. Ford, which was superseded in course of time by more modern cars of varying makes. Owing to the rough surface of many of the tracks leading to outlying villages and posts the old average of 20 m.p.h. attained by the decrepit Model T. was not increased to any very great extent even when travelling in an up-to-date 8-cylinder car. Moreover, it is a moot point whether the very resilient suspension of

the latest models is any improvement on the primitive transverse springing of the old cars for really rough going ; the new system may absorb very efficiently a slight unevenness in the road, but it tends to exaggerate a real bump, and real bumps are a common feature in the desert.

The distances which Peake had to cover in the course of these tours of inspection were considerable. One day he might be required to visit Ajlun, not far from the Syrian border, while on the next some unforeseen situation would crop up demanding his presence at Akaba, 250 miles to the south, to be followed perhaps by an urgent call to the eastern frontier. Constant travel by motor across these great spaces, along dusty featureless desert tracks, became wearisome and turned his thoughts to other modes of progression.

It was just about then that the perfection of the small Moth aeroplane had for the first time brought aviation, as a means of travel, within reach of the general public. Peake became air-minded. He bought one of these machines early in 1930, rightly confident that the big R.A.F. aerodrome at Amman, which was only a short mile from his house, would provide an unlimited supply of first-class pilots for his instruction. He got to work at once, and was able to put in several hours' flying a day. Much of his tuition was received at the hands of Roger Atcherley, who was at that time probably the finest pilot in the Air Force but who, like many experts, laboured under the delusion that an art which was child's-play to himself must necessarily come as easily to others. He was inclined to attribute to his pupil a skill which he was in reality far from possessing—a propensity of which Peake was made painfully aware by an incident, which might well have proved fatal to both of them, when on the second day of his instruction the dual-control machine in which they were flying plunged suddenly earthward, hit the ground obliquely with a resounding bump and careered across the aerodrome in a series of enormous bounds, like a gazelle in full stride. When the plane had finally come to rest well outside the boundary of the landing-ground, Atcherley turned to Peake in the seat behind him.

"What do you think you're playing at?" he said peevishly. "It's no earthly use your going on learning if you can't do better than that!"

"Better than what?" asked the astonished Peake. "I wasn't doing anything. You were in control. You never told me to take over and land the thing."

But that, it transpired, was exactly what the over-sanguine instructor had done—only unfortunately, owing to a defect in the communication-tube, his message had failed to get through, with the alarming result described.

After taking tea in the mess they made another attempt.

"I'll take her up for you," said Atcherley, "and get her in position for landing. Then you take over and bring her down."

When they had climbed to about forty feet, Atcherley turned round and waved a stick at his pupil, who, thinking this was merely a cheery gesture of "All's right with the world," was about to wave back when the plane disconcertingly dipped its nose, and next instant crashed into the ground, shearing off its under-carriage and smashing one wing, whilst an ominous plume of black smoke ascended from the engine.

Atcherley jumped out immediately, but Peake, who was badly winded, remained in his seat.

"What on earth have you done now?" he gasped.

"I think you'd better get out before we discuss that," said Atcherley; "the plane's on fire!"

Peake had just got clear when the whole machine burst into flames and in a short time was utterly destroyed. The explanation of the disaster was that the joy-stick had become detached from its fittings, leaving Atcherley helpless to control the machine, whereupon, being debarred from verbal communication owing to the defective tube, he had waved the stick in Peake's face to show him what had happened and warn him to take over. Peake, however, in his innocence, had failed to recognize the stick as an integral part of the machine (he thought it was a cane which Atcherley habitually carried), and had taken no action.

Two such experiences in one afternoon might excusably have damped the ardour of a budding aeronaut, but Peake, though he had four ribs broken in the second and more ambitious crash, was in no way deterred. He bought a new aeroplane, continued his lessons and, despite the fact that he was already forty-six years old when he began to fly, he learned quickly and was soon able to manage his machine. Then he put the Legion to work to clear small landing-grounds in the vicinity of their posts in every part of Trans-Jordan, and thereafter made all his visits of inspection by air.

It was soon borne in upon him that his new method of locomotion did not meet with the unstinted approval of the men of the Arab Legion. A flying inspector, they felt, enjoyed unfair advantages, denied to his earth-bound prototype. Not only did he arrive at his destination with uncanny suddenness, but he could no doubt see from his elevated viewpoint a whole number of things which are better left hidden from the inquisitorial eye. A lonely police post does like to receive some timely notification of the approach of its commanding officer. Isolated outposts in the desert have a tendency to become a trifle untidy, for stray Beduin are constantly dropping in for coffee or a meal, and, although apparently a Beduin never carries anything with him beyond his pipe, tobacco and skin of water, he invariably manages to leave as much rubbish and litter behind him as does the average Bank holiday tripper on Brighton beach.

Legionaries, after all, are not sweepers, to clean up after a Beduin coffee-party! A sweeper in the East belongs to a despised class with which they would be loth to identify themselves. It followed that the normal workaday condition of a desert post rarely achieved the standard of orderliness expected by a commanding officer, and, though with an hour or two's warning much could be done to remedy the deficiency and bring the barrack and its surroundings to a satisfactory state of tidiness, the trouble with an aeroplane was that no such breathing-space ever supervened. Peake was on the spot almost as soon as his impending arrival had been notified. The Legion did its best to redress the unequal balance by instituting a system of warnings, whereby the laconic code-word "Ghayamit" ("The cloud is coming") was transmitted by telephone, wire or wireless to any post threatened with visitation, but as often as not the aeroplane was already overhead before even this short message could be got through!

In connection with this question of the condition and general smartness of desert outposts, the writer recalls an occasion when the Commandant of Palestine Police made a general tour of inspection of his outlying stations shortly after his arrival to take over his command in the East. On this tour he passed through a part of both Trans-Jordan and Sinai, and on his return commented eulogistically upon the general condition of his posts as compared with those in the two adjoining countries ; and comparisons are seldom pleasant.

"When I came through Akaba," he said, "I was delighted to find my post in a wonderful state of smartness and cleanliness, and very different from both yours and Peake's."

It was pointed out to him that in the inverse ratio this was precisely the impression obtained by both the Trans-Jordan and Sinai Commandants when they went on a much-advertised tour of inspection, because everything depended so much on ample warning being given. The normal state of the solitary Palestine post on the Gulf of Akaba when no new commandant was expected to make an inspection was very much the same as that of any other desert station ; in fact, as it was visited far less frequently than the others, its standard was if anything below average.

Actually, although Peake was under the impression that his aeroplane was not popular among the Legion, the writer can assure him that when dealing with people from outside they gave obvious signs that they were very proud of the fact that their Commandant flew in his own aeroplane. However much the aeroplane may have incommoded them in the natural routine of their lives, it was nevertheless a clear manifestation that the Arab Legion was slightly superior to similar formations in adjoining States, for did not their commanding officer go about his day's work flying his own private machine, not a Government one, mark you ! what time his opposite numbers were content to travel in ordinary Ford cars ? The Sinai Police found the social superiority and aeroplane snobbishness of the Arab Legion almost insufferable at these times.

Peake's passion for peacocks, which constitutes an alliterative headline calculated to make the average Fleet Street editor go green with envy, has been commented on by every visitor to Amman who has seen the front garden of his house filled with these decorative birds, or has noted the fact that the crest of the Legion Christmas card is a peacock *rampant*. People who saw them in their multitudes wondered how it was possible to run a garden and a peacock poultry-yard at one and the same time, and the truth was it was not possible, as Peake discovered after several flowerless seasons, and when the peacocks reproduced their species in vast numbers they were exiled to the Legion barracks and prison compound where, when the last census was taken in 1939, there were over one hundred birds in residence. He, however, kept the sultan of the harem with one hen at the house to maintain the peacock tradition, and these two, Suliman the Magnificent and Bint, his wife, were always to be seen ; Suliman displaying his feathers from his stance on one of the broken Byzantine columns in the garden, whilst the more retiring Bint scratched in the flower beds, and sometimes in the road opposite. The word Bint means virgin—a



name to which the lady would with difficulty have justified her title seeing that she was the mother of at least a hundred offspring.

It was about this time that so-called taxis made their first appearance in Amman and a "taxi" is a name given in the East to any type of car that plies for hire. They were of many varieties of American makes, an English car being almost unheard of, and were driven by Amman youths with what might be described as joyful abandon.

The preference for American cars to the exclusion of British was due entirely to the short-sighted policy of our Government at home who persisted in the horse-power tax, despite the fact that dealers, officials and everyone in Dominions, Colonies and Dependencies were warning them of the effect it was having on our overseas trade. Our automobile engineers and experts in this country devoted the whole of their ingenuity and time to evolving small cars that would give the best possible results with the lowest horse-power. Such cars were quite satisfactory on the excellent roads in Great Britain and the Continent, but were quite useless in countries where only rough tracks are available. Twenty horse-power is the minimum required where soft sand may be expected and steep passes have to be negotiated, and moreover for rough going something with both weight and stability is essential. The automobile manufacturers of England could not keep two staffs and two plants going, one to design and make small cars for the home market and the other to work on models for abroad, and as the result of our stupid policy we threw away literally the whole of our foreign trade in cars to the far-seeing American.

When the so-called taxis appeared in Trans-Jordan the Government issued regulations for their maintenance in safe running condition, and these regulations were so far-reaching that after one week's work not a single car complied with the various conditions, which embraced such things as reliable brakes, hooter and wind-screen wiper in working order, a new spare wheel, efficient lamps and various other items which only a most optimistic office official could hope for.

One day when Peake was walking back to his house from the office he saw Bint, the peacock, on the road as usual pecking in the dust for fallen grains of corn, when a taxi driven at high speed came along. Bint moved to the side of the road to avoid the car, but the driver swerved in her direction, ran over her deliberately and killed her.

Peake could do nothing to punish the man legally, for it is quite impossible to prove deliberate intent in the case of any car accident, and in the eyes of the law the peachen of a very senior official has no more immunity from wanton drivers than the bird of the poorest in the land. He could, however, as the official responsible for public security see that the various regulations concerning public motor-car vehicles were rigidly adhered to, and that evening, having explained that an accident had occurred in front of his house owing to faulty brakes, he issued instructions that every taxi in Amman was to be carefully examined by the police and, if they failed to come up to standard, their licences were to be suspended until such time as the car complied with the regulations. The following day there were no taxis in Amman and, as every car owner in the place knew who was responsible for this sudden insistence on compliance with the regulations,

the peahen slaying taxi driver had a very miserable time for many weeks. Peake's servants informed him that the man dare not venture from his house on account of the number of licenceless men who were looking for him to slap his face !

Peake's addiction to peacocks dated back to his early Indian days and, on leaving that country for the Sudan, he brought with him twenty birds in crates. When he started on the journey from Cairo up the Nile to Khartum he asked an Egyptian staff officer to arrange with the station staffs on the railway and steamer for a little corn and water to be available at one or two places for the peacocks. In Egypt and the Sudan a small request like this is either forgotten immediately by the man to whom it is made, and by everyone who is expected to comply with it, or, alternatively, it is obeyed with a thoroughness and efficiency which causes the occasion to be an epoch in the life of the person concerned. The staff officer was either impressed by Peake's personality or by that of the peacocks, with the result that the arrangements made for feeding and watering were on a par with those required to transfer a mounted unit.

At every station on the line and at every stopping place on the river excited station-masters, accompanied by men carrying sacks of grain and tanks of water, hauled Peake relentlessly out of the train or boat, and insisted upon his feeding the birds. The raids occurred not only by day, but also in the middle of the night, irrespective of whether the birds would eat or drink in the darkness. When eventually the peacocks and their owner arrived at Khartum the former were suffering from over-eating, and the latter was worn out after seven sleepless nights and broken days.

The Indo-Sudan strain of peacocks died out during the war, but when the Emir Abdulla arrived in Amman from the Hedjaz he brought with him a peacock—Suliman the Magnificent. It will be remembered that Solomon's ships of Tarshish coming from much the same part of the world were in the habit of bringing back peacocks among the cargo. Peake coveted this bird, but to his chagrin the Emir gave it to Colonel Cox, then Resident in Amman. During the first day of its sojourn at Colonel Cox's quarters, however, the peacock put in a hard day's work on the garden where a large variety of English vegetable seeds had just been sown, and the next morning Cox telephoned Peake and kindly offered him the bird. Bint was then obtained from Cairo as a mate for Suliman, and later Sir Ronald Storrs, then Governor of Cyprus, sent him a couple of pairs from that island.

After the rebellion in Syria had been quelled in 1927 the troublous portion of the Middle East settled down to some measure of peace and security, marred only by tribal raids along the Saudi-Arabia frontier which, as they were entirely a Beduin affair, did not affect the settled areas to the north and west. Palestine was prosperous with an enormous increase in the acreage of citrus fruit cultivation, the Arabs contributing to this effort as well as the Jews, and various small but new industries were beginning to operate in the bigger towns ; Syria, after nine years of unrest and revolt, was beginning to return to normal conditions ; and Trans-Jordan, the poor relation, producing little beyond her own needs and with no raw products

to draw upon, was making the best of her semi-barren lands and bringing many of the old Roman irrigation systems into use again.

Peace and prosperity brought with it tourists and visitors, and the tourist trade is not to be despised, although it is a somewhat uncertain factor. Financial slumps affect the spending powers of the traveller class, and, moreover, any hint of rebellion or unrest sends them to the opposite corner of the globe to find their sunshine and relaxation in more peaceful surroundings. Petra was naturally a very great attraction as, in its wild mountain setting, the old forgotten town is quite unique among the various antiquities of the Middle East, and the journey to it through the deserts and highlands of Trans-Jordan is full of interest. Mainly to cope with the large number of tourists wishing to see this old Nabattee town the Hedjaz Railway was reopened, and the line repaired as far as Maan, but the traffic was sufficient only for one train each way per week. There were no signals anywhere on the railway—these having disappeared during the war and the years of unrest that followed it—and with only one train on the whole hundred and fifty miles' length there was no necessity for them. The railway staff, however, felt that they lost caste by operating a line completely devoid of signals and to satisfy them a very imposing one, complete with arms, was erected just outside Amman station. Unfortunately the wires essential for the working of it from the station were not included in the outfit, and therefore, when the weekly Maan "express" drew out from Amman, it pulled up opposite the signal where the engine-driver descended to let the arm down. The line being now open he went on another seventy yards or so, and stopped to enable the guard to get down and hoist the arm up again. On completion of this ceremony, the train would then start on her one hundred and fifty mile run with complete confidence as to the safety of the track.

On arrival at Maan the tourists would be met by local taxis driven out the twenty-odd miles across the desert to the little village of Wadi Musa, where the once turbulent villagers would meet them with horses and donkeys for the ride through the Sik, the extremely narrow gorge that leads into Petra proper. Here, during the season, Thos. Cook & Sons maintained a camp for visitors, who were allotted either tents or furnished tombs as their fancy dictated. There were, however, a very large number of people who visited Petra under their own steam, as it were, and who made their own arrangements with regard to camp accommodation. Frequently these visitors, seeing Cook's people comfortably installed in carved-out tombs, took over one of the neighbouring ones for themselves. There are hundreds of these cut out of the surrounding cliffs, many of them in tiers, so that in parts Petra looks like a modern tenement building, and, as these old tombs or houses—for it is not quite certain what part they played—are all untenanted there appears to be no valid reason why a camping party should not shelter for the night in one and start a fire for cooking. In about ten minutes' time the travellers would begin to evince a certain restlessness. Soon they would all be scratching furiously, and then suddenly the whole party, screaming loudly, would scramble into the open, dragging their camp kit and blankets with them.

Every one of these deserted tombs is literally swarming with voracious

and blood-thirsty fleas, and if one happens to be wearing a pair of light-coloured stockings one sees them turn grey, and then black, by reason of the myriads which are hurrying to the feast. The explanation is that all these tombs have been occupied from time to time by the Wadi Musa Arabs, and every Arab is normally alive with fleas. When the female flea becomes a maternity case she drops off her host, and lays her eggs in the sand in some spot sheltered from the sun. The eggs hatch into small very hungry fleas, which can apparently live an almost indefinite period without food, but immediately they scent a living thing they hurry in their countless hordes to the unfortunate human being or animal. The caves occupied by the guests of Thos. Cook & Sons have been most carefully cleaned out, fumigated and sprayed with every known insect destroyer, but this treatment is not applied to any of the others.

It was Peake's fate to take many parties to Petra and show them the sights, and parties of this description vary considerably. Sometimes every member is highly delighted with the experience and willing to put up with every desert hardship, but occasionally the peevish and fractious are inadvertently included, and their natural irritability is aggravated by the bumping of the car in the desert, and the rough jogging of the Trans-Jordan pony. On one occasion there was a very troublesome lady in the party who was never satisfied with her seat in the car, the pony allotted to her, or her place at wayside meals. On arrival at Petra she was, of course, dissatisfied with her cave; its outlook was not so good as that of others, and she did not care for its position. She said she was going into another and Peake advised her strongly to put up with the one she had, but naturally she knew better. The following morning early the guests saw a naked woman dancing about on the cliffs and slapping herself vigorously, and were under the impression at first that they were watching some native orgy connected with the mysterious past of Petra, but it was merely the peevish member of the party endeavouring to free herself of the fleas that had collected on her during the night.

Petra, together with Jerash, the Roman town north of Amman, was responsible for a steady influx of visitors during the winter months in the peaceful years between 1928 and 1938, and the money they took into the country constituted a quite appreciable asset and provided employment for a considerable number of people. It is a remarkable testimony to Peake's administration and to the efficiency of the Arab Legion he created that these crowds of tourists, often in solitary motor-cars, were able to travel all over Trans-Jordan from Akaba in the south to Irbid in the north without a single case of robbery or hold-up. In the years prior to the late war, and for some time afterwards, Trans-Jordan might have been classed as one of the most lawless countries in the world, where almost every man considered it his right to rob the traveller if the traveller was not adequately protected, and where a hold-up was an almost daily occurrence; but once the inter-tribal difficulties had been solved and the country policed by men who understood the standard demanded of them, Trans-Jordan became as safe as, if not safer, than the average British countryside. The only drawback to all this was that it defeated the travelling author who had gone out purposely to write up his thrilling adventures among Lawrence's Arabs.

It is a most disappointing experience for writers of this calibre to find themselves in a country where the police have got the upper hand, but as most of these writers are quite as expert at fiction as at travel autobiographies their books seldom suffer from lack of incident. It was always a source of great amusement to Peake to read in some volume on a journey in Trans-Jordan an account of a desperate encounter with Beduin that had never occurred except in the vivid imagination of the author.

## CHAPTER XVII

## REVOLT IN PALESTINE

"Seditio civium hostium est occasio." (*Publius Syrus.*)

THE REBELLION IN PALESTINE, WHICH BROKE OUT IN 1936 AND LASTED FOR three years, constituted one of the severest tests of its loyalty and discipline to which the Arab Legion was subjected during the whole of its service under Peake. The rising, which began in May, at first took the form of a general strike but eventually the situation deteriorated until practically the whole country was in a state of rebellion, with armed bands of Arabs operating from lonely villages or from hiding-places in the hills and, the police being unable to cope with the situation, a considerable number of British troops were sent to Palestine to endeavour to maintain order.

The cause of the rebellion was the interpretation of the Balfour Declaration, and when one tries to explain the situation one cannot do better than quote a few lines from Mr. George Antonius's book, *The Arab Awakening* :

"The understanding of the Palestine problem lies not so much in its inherent complexity as in the solid jungle of legend and propaganda which has grown up around it. To the ordinary tasks of a student dealing with the facts is thus added an obligation to deal with pseudo-facts and dethrone them from their illegitimate eminence.

"There is in existence already a considerable body of literature in English and other European languages on the history of the British mandate in Palestine. But it has to be used with care, partly because of the high percentage of open or veiled propaganda, and partly because the remoteness of the indispensable Arab sources has militated against real fairness, even in the works of neutral and fair-minded historians. . . . Zionist propaganda is active, highly-organized and widespread : the world Press, at any rate in the democracies of the West, is largely amenable to it ; it commands many of the available channels for the dissemination of news, and more particularly those of the English-speaking world. Arab propaganda is, in comparison, primitive and infinitively less successful. . . . The result is, that for a score of years or so, the world has been looking at Palestine mainly through Zionist spectacles and has unconsciously acquired the habit of reasoning on Zionist premisses."

As Mr. Antonius puts in very smooth and polished English, which is remarkable seeing that he could write it quite as well, if not better, in his own tongue—Arabic—the misunderstanding in Palestine goes back a long way and is not easy to understand by reason of distortion of facts. The immediate cause of the outbreak in 1936, however, was the inordinate number of Jewish immigrants which had been allowed to enter the country during the three previous years, namely, 30,000, 42,000 and 61,000. The excuse for the enormous increase in the annual quota was the persecution of Jews in Germany, but of the 30,000 who entered Palestine in 1934 only 5,000 were of German origin and the remaining 25,000 hailed mainly from south-eastern Europe. At the rate Jews were being permitted to enter the country it became obvious that the indigenous Arab would become a minority in the land in another ten years, and this was contrary to the conditions of the Balfour Declaration.

Protests from various sources against this mass immigration having failed, the Palestinians began to use other methods until finally the whole country was in much the same unhappy state as was southern Ireland in 1921, with police and military holding the towns, and the rebels (or patriots) in command of the open country. The sympathies of the Arabs of Trans-Jordan were whole-heartedly with their countrymen across the river, but as their land was just beginning to experience the benefits of a few years of peace and security after the trials and tribulations of the post-war period there was a keen desire on the part of both the people and the rulers to keep the country free from rebellion. This was far from easy as there is nothing more difficult than the maintenance of strict neutrality in a country when the adjoining State is at war, or in open rebellion, and this is more particularly the case when the people of the neutral State are related by blood and other ties to one of the belligerents.

The unfortunate part about the Palestine rising was the subterranean activity of the Arab party among their own people to maintain a solid front against the Government, which included terrorization of those members of the population who were not in favour of revolution, or who were half-hearted in their attitude; the forcible enlistment of recruits; and the employment of threats of violence to obtain funds, and these threats were carried out immediately if there were signs of non-compliance or hesitation. Not only were these methods employed in Palestine itself, but also in the neighbouring State of Trans-Jordan and even in Sinai, a province of Egypt.

The people who were intimidated in this fashion were those Trans-Jordan and Sinai families who owned land or shops in Palestine, or who had relatives in the country. Secret agents would visit them and inform them that unless funds were forthcoming or a certain number of recruits sent to fight, their property in Palestine would be destroyed or their relatives murdered. It was most difficult for the police of Trans-Jordan and Sinai to check these activities, as any sign which proved the Arabs concerned had given information was a signal for the threats to take active form in Palestine immediately. As was the case in Ireland in 1920 and 1921, the ordinary inhabitants of the country suffered far more from their own people than from the actions of the police and troops endeavouring to suppress the rising.

In Trans-Jordan, where so many of the settled inhabitants hailed originally from Palestine, the rebels' agents were particularly active, and with a number of the junior officials of the Government sympathizing with the revolution it was practically impossible to put a stop to their machinations. In addition to this there was a constant traffic in arms and ammunition, which were brought into Palestine across Trans-Jordan from Syria, Irak and the Hedjaz, and the Arab Legion were more effective here, as part of their normal duties was the prevention of smuggling of *hashish* through the country to Egypt. Smuggler-hunting is regarded as very good sport, and both the police and Beduin smugglers enjoy it. Almost it takes the place of fox-hunting in this country, resembling it in so many ways, as horses are used to run the quarry down and we all know, or at least have been told so very frequently, that the fox enjoys the hunt as much as the hounds, horses and huntsmen. In any case, the Legion hunted Beduin smugglers as much for the sport as for the rewards for successful captures, and, where the "brush" took the form of cases of rifles and ammunition instead of packets of *hashish*, they brought them into headquarters as trophies of the chase.

A considerable number of young men from the villages disappeared and joined the Arab forces, returning from time to time to persuade others to enlist, and, being regarded as heroes in the coffee-shops of the home town, were not unsuccessful. On the whole, the Beduin nomad tribes of the desert were not enthusiastic and, although a few of the younger men went over to Palestine for the sake of the excitement and the possibilities of loot, the normal attitude of the tribesmen was that this trouble between cultivators and townsmen, whether they were Arabs or Jews, was not their immediate concern. It is almost impossible for the grazier of camels, sheep and goats, who measures his wealth and social position by the size of his herds, to realize there is anything to quarrel about in despised houses, orchards of trees and crops. The whole business struck their nomad minds as not worth while, though if the disagreement had been caused by Jewish interference with sacred grazing rights, raiding of animals, or taking over of wells and water supplies, they might have seen the matter in a different light. Moreover, few of them had come into actual contact with Jews and knew of them only as the *Beni Israel* (sons of Israel), and therefore men of Arab stock.

People who are unacquainted with either the Jews or the Arabs and the situation in Palestine may wonder why it has been impossible to create a successful settlement of Jews in the country, seeing that they brought prosperity and trade with them. The fault lies very largely with the Jews themselves, and the following extract from a book written by a well-known Jewish writer, Louis Golding, throws some light on the subject :

"To my fellow-Jews, I would be so bold as to make a suggestion. They are an estimable section of society ; they know it ; they can hardly help knowing it ; but there is no reason why some of them should so loudly insist upon it. It is a fine achievement to make two blades of grass grow where one grew before ; but it is not particularly clever for six Jews to go out of their way to attract as much attention as twelve.

Non-Jews often hear with sceptical surprise there are only 350,000 Jews in this country (Great Britain) ; they know, they say, more than that number themselves. There is nothing criminal in this lack of restraint. It is no doubt good for trade when a Jewish wedding is celebrated with a maximum of ostentation in a fashionable hotel in Park Lane. The road-houses with a Jewish clientèle have doubtless brought relief to many desolate agricultural areas. Young Jewish tailors from the East End clearly have as much right to talk at the tops of their voices in a public place as an Oxford undergraduate of Norman descent. All this is doubtless true. But such conduct is tactless and it is unwise. If the 350,000 Jews in this country gave the appearance of being 175,000 instead of 3,000,000 no one would be the worse ; and their immediate outlook—and that of their unfortunate co-religionists, who would give up years of life to be admitted here—would be brighter."

I quote this here, not as Peake's biographer, but as an observer of affairs in Palestine in an endeavour to throw some light on the hostility that the Jews have aroused. For fourteen years I served as an Arab administrator on the borders of Palestine and was thus able to see things from the standpoint of an onlooker, who was an admirer of the great achievements of the Jewish settlers in the land, particularly those areas which had been regarded for generations as hopeless for all forms of agriculture. Nevertheless, I think it is obvious that the hostility against the Jews is almost entirely their own fault for the reasons given by their own spokesman, and for this national aggressiveness, which is so apparent when things are going well in Jewish circles, but which is so markedly absent at other times.

It is a fact that of all the British officials who have served, or are serving, in Palestine, probably some ninety-five per cent have been pro-Arab and anti-Jewish in their sympathies, and this fact has been commented upon frequently in Jewish propaganda. It is admitted that an official should not have private likes and dislikes and it is not suggested for one moment that these officials allowed their sympathies to interfere with the performance of their duties, but the personal views of some ninety-five per cent of the administrative staff created an atmosphere which the Arab party sensed, and it was possibly this attitude—this unconscious and intangible backing—that had some influence on their actions.

The Jews may ask why officials with these views were sent to serve in Palestine, and the answer is that the great majority of these men had no preconceived ideas on the subject when they took up their appointments originally and many of them, in fact, were inclined to be pro-Jewish in their attitude. Their personal feelings developed later as the result of coming in contact with the two races. This aggressiveness, on which Mr. Golding comments, not only made the Arab population nervous of the future if the Jews should become a majority, but it antagonized the British officials. An administrator with some fifteen years' service in Palestine explained all this as follows : if an Arab has a complaint to make about some land problem he states his case clearly and politely, and suggests that when the matter is examined his rights will be apparent ; the Jew, on the other hand—frequently with his hat on—will assert himself, will suggest



that government of the country is in the hands of nit-wits, and will convey the impression that he knows more of the legal situation than any Government official. Possibly he does, but it is not quite wise to make such a statement in the office of the man charged with the maintenance of justice. In addition to this there were constant vituperative attacks in Jewish papers in Palestine on the conduct of British police and administrative officers in the performance of their duty, and I know of one senior official, who had been markedly pro-Jew in his views and actions, who gave up his advocacy of the race in disgust after two or three unjust and unfounded attacks.

As the Arab-Jewish controversy in Palestine did not affect Peake in any way beyond the fact that he did not wish it to spread to the country for which he was responsible, he did that which is known in the East as the Pontius Pilate gesture—he washed his hands of it completely. In all things concerning the matter he was entirely neutral and non-committal, making it a point never to express an opinion to Arab, Jew or Gentile, and the only time when he came in contact with the anti-Jewish feeling in an active form he dealt with it in his customary effective manner. On the occasion when several car-loads of Jews came to Es Salt on a day's outing they were stoned by about twenty small boys of the village, and Peake had the boys rounded up immediately. Afterwards Arab Legionaries caned them soundly on their posteriors to remind them that the people of Trans-Jordan were not concerned in the controversy, and that the old Arab laws of courtesy and hospitality to all comers were to be observed in the country.

As the rebellion in Palestine grew, with casualties on either side, the situation in Trans-Jordan became more difficult, for the country was treated as an unofficial convalescent camp for the rebels, who came there for a rest from the fatigues and hardships of guerrilla warfare in the Palestine hills, whilst many wounded and wanted men were brought over and attended to by Trans-Jordan doctors, and the doctors were usually officials in the pay of the Trans-Jordan Government. Peake's sole concern was to keep the rising on the west bank of the Jordan, and not to allow it to spread to the State for the peace of which he was responsible. This was not easy, for the men of the Legion were all either Arabs or Circassians whose relatives were whole-heartedly with the rebels, and it says much for the steadiness and discipline of the Force that they continued to remain loyal and capture great hauls of machine-guns, rifles, ammunition and money when their activities were so unpopular with their own people and immediate kith and kin.

Then the rebels extended their activities, and to embarrass the British Government began to send parties of men to blow up the Mosul oil pipe-line, which is particularly vulnerable to this form of sabotage. As there are about two hundred miles of more or less exposed pipe-line in northern Trans-Jordan the guarding of this new responsibility was quite beyond the powers of the existing strength of the Arab Legion, and permission to enlist a further six hundred men was granted. There was little difficulty in obtaining recruits, for by this time the Legion was a most popular force. Since its disaster at El Kura, shortly after its formation, it had experienced an unbroken record of success in quelling local risings, and peace had been

re-established either with the minimum of casualties or none at all. It had, therefore, the reputation of being a body of men to which it was an honour to belong, and to boast of a husband, son or brother in the Legion was the desire of every woman in the land, and women in the Orient, though they play a subdued part, have the last word to say and the final decision to make in many matters, though their direct influence on affairs may not be always evident. In addition to this the uniform was smart, the horses were well turned out, and the pay was generous in a country where a fraction of a piastre is a sum with which to conjure. The attractions of the Force and the prospects of good pay in a permanent post were such that the endeavours of the Arab extremists to discourage enlistment had no effect on the rush of new recruits.

Bands of rebels then began to cross over the frontier and towards the end of the rebellion raids were made on Trans-Jordan posts near the border, which, as they had been constructed primarily as barrack accommodation and not strong points, were not in a position to hold out against a determined attack. These raids were made with the object of obtaining arms and ammunition and on one occasion, after a successful assault had been made, the rebel leader wrote in the inspection book of the barracks: "I congratulate the O.C. Arab Legion on the efficiency and cleanliness of this post," which suggests that some of the rebels had had the benefit of a somewhat higher form of education than that provided by the local schools of Palestine.

Towards the end of 1938 the activities of the rebels in the northern part of Trans-Jordan increased and large parties were constantly crossing over this area from Syria to fight in Palestine, afterwards returning to Syria to re-arm and equip. To counteract this Peake formed a large camp at Khirbet el Fahil, which lies between Irbid and the Jordan and which is the site of the old Roman city of Pella. At Mafrak he posted a strong detachment of desert patrol cars, whilst Ajlun was garrisoned by a squadron of the Trans-Jordan Frontier Force, which had been sent to the country in 1927.

The Trans-Jordan Frontier Force, which started life as the Palestine Gendarmerie, consisted of squadrons of cavalry and armoured cars, and represented the small regular army of the State. Its rôle was to cope with any situation which became too serious for the Arab Legion to tackle, such as a general rising or a raid from the Saudi-Arabian country of considerable magnitude, similar to the Wahabi invasions of 1922 and 1924. Their transfer to Trans-Jordan in 1927 was partly because of the threat from the Wahabis, and partly because it was thought that Palestine would be more settled and peaceable if there were no organized military force in the country. If the Frontier Force were hidden away discreetly in the wilds of Trans-Jordan they would still be available at two days' notice to handle any local troubles in Palestine and their actual presence in the country, which might be construed as an irritation and a threat, would be avoided. In the light of present-day events it sounds a muddle-headed appreciation of the situation, but in the latter 1920's and early '30's placation, combined with what can only be described as "sloppiness," was the keynote of our various Governments' policies.

The Force was officered by seconded British officers from the regular army and a certain number of permanent squadron commanders, who had joined the unit on its formation. At the time of the Palestine rebellion it was commanded by Lieut.-Colonel J. I. Chrystall, M.C., 13th/18th Hussars, who has recently distinguished himself in the fighting in Syria.

With the assistance of the Trans-Jordan Frontier Force along the line of the River Jordan the activities of the rebels were curtailed and for the next few months the fastnesses of the Kura were denied to them. It was at this time that Peake was given another British officer to assist him, for Glubb's work as Beduin specialist kept him usually on the southern and eastern frontiers, where the general unrest in the Middle East caused an uncertainty which required a watchful eye and the maintenance of a force to cope with any new situation that might arise.

The new officer for the Legion was Macadam from the Palestine Police, who took over the armed car section, which had been increased considerably and which was particularly active watching both the Syrian border and the various crossings of the Jordan south of Tiberias. In 1939, a month before Peake retired from the service, a large band of rebels from Palestine invaded the Kura but, owing to the presence of the various detachments in the different villages, they were quickly surrounded. The Royal Air Force then sent over aeroplanes to bomb the hillsides, whilst the cavalry and cars rounded the Arabs up as they broke and tried to escape down the valleys. A considerable number of the rebels were killed or wounded, many prisoners were taken and only a few escaped to return to Palestine. Unfortunately during this engagement Macadam, who had shown great skill and bravery, was killed while pushing home the attack. After this salutary lesson there was little infiltration of rebels from Palestine and no further attempts were made to instigate the people to rise. In the spring of 1939, as a result of the Palestine Conference in London, an agreement was arrived at, which gave neither party complete satisfaction, but which at any rate resulted in a truce for the time being.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### PEACE, RECONSTRUCTION—AND FAREWELL

"A well from which thou drinkest, throw not a stone into it." (*Arab proverb.*)

THE FIRST EIGHT YEARS OF PEAKE'S SERVICE IN TRANS-JORDAN HAD BEEN SO fully occupied with raising and training a force from nothing, putting down his own small rebellions, and preventing the far more extensive ones of his immediate neighbours from spreading to his own territory, that beyond protecting his villagers from their nomad neighbours—the Beduin—he had found little time for elaborating schemes for the extension of trade and cultivation on their behalf. With the more peaceful conditions that followed the end of the drawn-out Syrian revolt he was able to study the situation

and, as a student of history and an embryo archæologist, to put his knowledge of the Roman past of Trans-Jordan to practical use.

As it was only during the Roman occupation of the country from about the first century A.D. until the Arab invasion some six hundred years later that the country had enjoyed any measure of continued prosperity Peake, like so many successful administrators, endeavoured to imitate the Romans, and to reconstruct so far as was possible the various trade routes and irrigation systems, which had flourished in the past and which some fourteen hundred years of neglect had caused to fall into disuse and general disintegration. Some of these trades and the routes they followed were dead for all time ; there was no possibility, for instance, of re-creating the old activity on the merchandise road that led up through Akaba to Ammon (Amman) and Hebron, along which had come caravans bearing the products of the East, and which in some measure was the *raison d'être* for Trans-Jordan's existence in its halcyon days ; but the foundation of that road still remained and its refurnishing was possible. Strategically, or to be more exact from a police point of view, it was most important as it provided a track over the highlands that ran from Petra northwards to Kerak and then to Amman and Bosra, and law and order follows the road, as the Romans and all their successors have discovered. This road was made originally in the first century A.D., as is shown by a milestone in the Wadi el Mojib north of Kerak bearing this date, and the following inscription :

“The Emperor Cæsar, son of the divine Nerva, Trajan Augustus . . . Dacius . . . Father of his country after the reduction of the province . . . opened and paved a new road from the frontiers as far as . . . Oh King.”

A few years ago such inscriptions were regarded as being absolutely truthful, but, in view of the fact that quite recently the descendants of the Romans, as represented by Graziani and his chief, Mussolini, have been erecting very similar proclamations in Libyan areas, into which they had penetrated temporarily and from which they were running like hares a few months later, one does not feel inclined to take them altogether at their face value to-day. The fact remains that, whatever may have happened on the road subsequent to the erection of the bombastic announcements, it was a most lasting and thorough piece of work, for in many parts of the desert it runs still along the surface and there may be seen huge kerbstones, a paved centre, and along it the scored-out tracks made by the wheels of fast-moving chariots. The reconstruction of this road in the latter part of Peake's service was largely due to his instigation or, to be more exact, insistence, and owing to the opening up of this old highway he was able to transport armed cars rapidly from one end of the State to the other. Running parallel to it, and some seventeen miles to the east, is the old caravan route of the pilgrimage days, described so vividly by Doughty in his *Arabia Deserta*. This route, which the railway follows, is the usual desert track with good fast going on gravel stretches, but with patches of heavy sand in parts, and seamed by small watercourses. It is a most boring and featureless road, dusty in summer and heavy with mud in winter, with the desert stretching away to the horizon in the east, and to the west the broken

stony ground rising gradually to the uplands of the cultivated areas around Shobek, Tafilah and Kerak.

The advantage of two parallel routes of this description is obvious, when one has to deal with fast-moving raiders endeavouring to return to their hiding-places in the desert, for the Beduin is not at his bravest when his retreat is in any way threatened, and, with the prospect of armed car patrols astride their desert communications, the raiders ceased to raid, and with the cessation of raiding came increased prosperity and cultivation. Incidentally, the tourists found the new road altogether to their liking, for in addition to the novelty of running on a real Roman highway, unused possibly since the day when the 10th (Martial) Legion retired up it after evacuating its barracks at El Udhray, near Petra, in face of the advancing Arabs, it is one of the most picturesque roads in the Middle East. It runs all the way just below the crest of the mountains of Edom, and from time to time one obtains a view in the far distance of the Sinai highlands across the vast gulf of the Wadi Araba six thousand feet below, with the Dead Sea in an opalescent haze of blue in the depths beneath; and out of this haze appear the summits of mountain peaks. Along this road are the various small keeps and posting stations of the Roman Legion, the typical story-book Crusader castle of Shobek covering the crest of a sugar-loaf white hill, and the big fortress town of Kerak with its turreted walls and old Norman gateway.

Perhaps the most interesting and useful of all the Roman remains were their various irrigation systems, some of them still being used by the local people, but the majority broken down and silted up with sand and gravel. These took the form of water channels leading a tiny stream in a gorge to land where it could be used for cultivation; dams in the bigger rivers that supplied irrigation to fields below; and vast surface and underground reservoirs set in catchment areas for the storage of rain-water. Some of these Peake caused to be put into a state of repair for the benefit of the local people who, with increased security, were beginning to till fields and plant orchards far away from the villages, and the great increase in cultivation, among other things, enabled Trans-Jordan to export corn to Palestine during the rebellion when, owing to the activities of bandits, some thousands of acres were left fallow.

The peace that reigned through Trans-Jordan was due largely to the fact that the Kaimakams (Governors) and senior police officers were all of Arab blood and recruited from the people. They were responsible entirely for public security and the general well-being of their communities, but their districts and posts were visited very frequently by Peake and Glubb, who made a point of never interfering in the general administration unnecessarily, but judging solely by results. A peaceful and happy community meant that law and order were maintained, and officials were passed over or promoted according to the standard of prosperity and general behaviour in their commands. The total cost of the Arab Legion and its prison department during these days of construction was only £140,000 a year, whilst across the Jordan in Palestine—a country half the size—a similar service had a budget of over £1,000,000. The old days of marching with large bodies of armed men to put down incipient rebellions were now over, and instead

Peake was able to reap the benefit of his years of careful construction and administration by being able to travel over all Trans-Jordan in a solitary touring car with only an orderly in attendance, and later to visit the most outlying and inaccessible spots alone in his aeroplane.

Amman became one of the most popular places in which to stay for the winter months, and Peake's house was usually full of guests bound for Petra to view the Nabatteean city; Jerash to see its Roman temples; or for Akaba where the winter camp on the gulf with big-game fishing at the tent door was beginning to attract attention. The well-known hospitable bachelor establishment, unique in the East where bachelors do not survive for long and unique also for the high standard on which it was run, came to an end as a celibate household in 1936 when Miss Elspeth Ritchie arrived to stay at Zerka with her sister, who is married to Major Yarde-Buller of the Trans-Jordan Frontier Force. One day they were invited over to lunch with Peake, and he gave a most unfavourable first impression. The rebellion in Palestine was then just beginning, and Peake and Buller had many important matters to discuss. The consequence was that Peake and Buller talked "shop" during the whole meal and afterwards, and the existence of the two girls was ignored completely. There would seem to be only one result when an eligible bachelor ignores an attractive girl completely on first meeting her, thus giving a thoroughly bad impression. As a biographer, and not a psychologist capable of elucidating feminine reactions, I am unable to explain why an unconscious slight of this type should put a woman on her mettle, but the fact remains that it does, and the imagined insult can only be wiped out by an engagement ring. Peake and Elspeth Ritchie became engaged shortly afterwards and in the early spring of 1937 the bachelor establishment came to an end, reopening immediately under entirely new management, but with the same staff of excellent servants and the ubiquitous Ahmed Salem, and an even higher standard of hospitality.

In the early days of 1939 Peake decided that the time had arrived to retire from the service and the Middle East and to endeavour to see something of his native land, from which he had been a permanent exile for over thirty years. Since he had sailed from England for India in 1906 the East had claimed him entirely and, except for infrequent spells of leave, he had seen nothing of his own country. The life he had led had been full and varied, but sooner or later the time arrives when retirement has to be faced and with it the picking up of threads again in England, not easy for a man who has spent the whole of his adult years abroad. In the Government service also there is the arbitrary age limit, which brings the service of an official to a close on reaching the age of sixty, and for some unexplained reason the average man likes to anticipate this, obtaining a certain amount of satisfaction from dictating his own date of retirement, and from the fact that he feels his work is so nearly completed before the time limit that he can safely leave it in the hands of his successor. Peake had several years in hand before the axe of age fell, but he recalled Lawrence's words to him on parting at the end of the 1918 campaign after the fall of Damascus: "I am going because the entry into Damascus was the climax. Never wait for the anti-climax." In Peake's own case one might say the climax had been reached: in nineteen years he had created from the bare bones of the

defunct Turkish constabulary the finest and best-disciplined force of Arab Legionaries in all Arabia ; he had established peace and prosperity throughout the length and breadth of a semi-desert State, which had not known such a condition since the Roman Legions retired from the land some thirteen hundred years previously ; and the body of men he had raised had remained loyal and efficient when subjected to the strain of rebellion on every side of them, together with internal and subterranean influences. But for the general unhappy state of affairs pertaining in Central Europe, for which neither Peake nor his immediate Chief and old friend, the Emir Abdulla, was in any way responsible, the barometer so far as Trans-Jordan was concerned was set fair, and the time had arrived for him to go as his work in the East was completed.

The last few weeks in Trans-Jordan were somewhat harrowing, for when the Arab gives his heart to a European—a rare occurrence—he does so without any reservation, and when Peake went round on his final tour of inspection there were some poignant scenes when he bade farewell to some kindly hospitable old sheikh, who years previously had possibly taken up arms against the Qaid's (Commander-in-Chief) first arrival in his area. There were cases, too, where whole villages turned out *en masse* to watch his departure and the people, having kissed his hand and said good-bye, stood aside with tears rolling down their cheeks when the car of the Qaid went out from the village for the last time. There were many private letters from his officers begging him to change his mind and stay with them, and among them one from an ex-member of the Legion who had been discharged for absence without leave—the absence being due to the fact that the officer was fighting with the rebels in Palestine. This letter, from a discharged and somewhat disgruntled officer then living in Irak, merits quotation. It ran as follows :

"Dear Peake Pasha,

"I am told you are going to return to your country and retire to England. In spite of the distance and the past circumstances, and the present obscure circumstances, I bid you a hearty and fervent good-bye, and I wish you every good luck in your native land. I wish to mention some of your good services in preferring the Arabic language in the Arab Legion and your love to the Islamic creeds.

"No matter how much I personally endured from you" (Peake of course had had the unpleasant task of dismissing him), "this does not forbid me from stating that you were very honourable in your military dealings. I very much care that the O.C. who will replace you will retain some of the habits of the Arab Legion of which is the retention of the khuza,<sup>1</sup> for which we worked hard.

"Good-bye and greeting, my dear . . ."

The night before he left Amman his old friend, the Emir Abdulla, gave a state banquet in his honour and the following day, shortly before Peake started in his car for Akaba, Suez, Port Said and the P. & O., he called in person to say farewell to his Qaid (Commander-in-Chief) who had served him so loyally from the day he first entered Trans-Jordan to rule the Principality.

Along the road to Akaba he passed through Kerak, Tafileh and Shobek,

<sup>1</sup> Saracen helmet worn by Legion in full dress.

where the townspeople lined the roads on either side of the villages, and here and there in the desert were drawn up on their camels and horses the local Beduin tribes, who galloped alongside the car firing their rifles in the air as a salute to their departing chief. At El Udrah, the site of the Roman barracks, the famous Howietat tribe were assembled under Hamd Ibn Jazi, one of Lawrence's fighting sheikhs, and here, in the largest tent the Howietat could produce, an Arab lunch was given attended by every sheikh and notable of this big Central Arabian tribe, with their followers camped over the surrounding desert. It was amusing in this connection to recall and compare his first meeting with the Howietat at Jafar in 1918, when the furious Abu Tayi, cousin of Hamd, had refused Peake's men water and forage during the advance of Lawrence's army on Deraa.

At Maan there was an even bigger gathering, for in addition to the townsmen and local villagers there were all the tribes from the Wadi Sirhan and Wadi Rum, including many who rightfully gave allegiance, not to Abdulla, but to his neighbour, Ibn Saud. Akaba was all present with the local Akabawi, the Zowieda from the hills to the north, the Lehewat from Sinaitic Araba and the Billi from the south, and, just as Peake's car reached the frontier line, on the Gulf of Akaba, that divides Trans-Jordan from Palestine, came the most affecting and touching of all the many farewells. An aeroplane appeared overhead, made a landing at what is called the psychological moment in front of the car, and from it stepped Abdul Kader, Peake's chief of staff, who had served with him through fair and foul, rough and smooth, from the earliest days of the Legion. Peake had bidden him, as he thought, a last farewell at Amman two days previously, but a kindly Royal Air Force officer, knowing of the affection and esteem which existed between these two men of different races, had flown the faithful Abdul Kader down to the frontier line to enable him to say farewell once again to his chief on the threshold of the State, for which they had laboured so long together.

Half an hour later, Peake in his car was climbing up the steep ascent of the Ras el Nagb to Sinai, from which twenty-one years previously almost to the day he had obtained, on his way to join Lawrence's Arabs, his first sight of the land which was to become his life's work.





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